Factors leading to differences in the internal structures of French agricultural quality groups: A Typology

Paper first received: 09 August 2024; Accepted: 25 November 2024; Published in final form: 21 December 2024
https://doi.org/10.48416/ijsaf.v30i2.542

Chirs BARDENHAGEN,[1] Philippe HOWARD, [1] Marie-Odile NOZIÈRES-PETIT,[2] and Loïc SAUVÉE[3]

Abstract

In France, agricultural quality signs, such as Protected Geographical Indications and Label Rouge, are managed by "quality groups" (QGs) — collective associations made up of farmers and other value chain actors. We conducted intensive interviews and document analysis with 12 diverse French QGs to better understand the types of actors and value chains involved in these organizations, their decision making structures, and their farmers' voting power relative to other value chain actors. We also utilized publicly-available documents for numerous other French QGs to inform our overall analysis. The value chain segments QGs capture vary substantially from group to group. While some are focused solely on farmers, others include businesses all the way from genetics through processing and packaging. Their product scopes range from meats and cheeses to fruits and vegetables, and further to flowers and other non-food agricultural products. We identified important factors that led to differences in the value chain structure involved in QGs: production chain length, processing mode, and distribution mode. We also identified different decisionmaking bodies and systems, and combined these with the above factors to develop a typology. We found that QG voting power ranges from fully controlled by farmers, to evenly split between upstream and downstream actors. Where value chains are focused on a supermarket or national specialty market scope, downstream actors have substantial power within the QG. Our typology may be useful for predicting relationships between value chain actors and for developing more equitable decisionmaking systems in future QG and geographical indication rural development efforts.

[1] Michigan State University, USA
[2] French National Research Institute for Agriculture, Food and the Environment (INRAE), France
[3] La Salle University, France

Corresponding author: Christopher Bardenhagen, bardenh1@msu.edu

Bibliographical note

Christopher J Bardenhagen, PhD Esq, is a Farm Business Management Educator with Michigan State University. His research areas include organizational modes for farmers and agribusiness, and conservation practice adoption and cost/benefit analysis.

Philip H. Howard, PhD, is a professor at the Department of Community Sustainability at Michigan State University. His areas of research include industry consolidation in the food system and the role of ecolabels in providing information to consumers.

Marie-Odile Nozières-Petit, PhD, is a researcher at the National Research Institute for Agriculture, Food, and the Environment (INRAE) and UMR Mediterranean and Tropical Livestock Systems (SELMET) in Montpellier, France. She studies the changes occurring in livestock systems, their resilience, and their organization and product markets.

Loïc Sauvée, PhD, is a professor and lead researcher for InTerACT at the Institut Polytechnique UniLaSalle in Beauvais, France. He studies marketing and organizational modes, managerial innovation, and network governance.

INTRODUCTION

Quality, either high quality or distinctive quality or both, has long been a strong tenet of farmers' collective action strategies in Europe (Schermer et al., 2011). European quality sign programmes such as Protected Geographical Indication (PGI), Protected Denominations of Origin (PDO),[1] and France's Label Rouge all provide strong institutional support to farmers and other value chain actors, who work together to produce foods and other agricultural products along a set of production standards. The focus of Geographical Indications (GIs) is to provide differentiation through the provenance of a product, using a label as intellectual property. GIs can be found in many countries around the world, having varying levels of institutional support. For countries that are signatories of the World Trade Organisation TRIPS agreements, GIs must provide at least a minimum level of intellectual property rights, enabling producers both inside and outside of the country to register and protect their mark.[2] The well-known PGI and PDO programmes are the European-wide GI programmes that comply with TRIPS. France's Label Rouge programme is functionally similar to GIs, but is based on high quality, especially sensory quality, rather than provenance. To obtain the label, Label Rouge products must have above average levels of taste and texture, proven by regular consumer and organoleptic testing (Westgren, 1999).

Extensive research has been carried out on the intellectual property aspects of these quality sign programmes (Marie-Vivien and Biénabe, 2017; Schermer et al., 2011) and their potential for sustainable rural development (Cei et al., 2018; Crescenzi et al., 2022). However, few studies have focused on the internal arrangements of groups involved in quality sign production: how they are organised, what specific processes are used to make important decisions, and the balance of functional decision-making power among the actors. This leaves open the important question of whether quality sign programmes are serving the farmers involved. In this article, we describe the different types of quality sign groups we found and the different weights that farmers have among other decisionmakers in those groups. Our results show that the groups we studied were indeed either farmer-centric or had a 50/50 decision making balance between farmers and downstream actors.

This article continues with a literature review, statement of research questions, and description of our methods of data gathering and analysis. Our Results and Discussion section presents the factors we identified that affect internal value chain structure: product chain length, mode of processing, and distribution mode. The decision-making systems we found are also described, with a focus on the relative voting power of the different actors. We then present the main types of QG structures we discovered, along with variations and outliers. The article concludes with a review of key points and potential applications.

Literature Review

Quality sign programmes vary across international contexts. Many of the groups taking advantage of quality signs are organised privately by the industries involved, but within legal boundaries set out by governments. At European Union level, the minimal requirement for GIs is that applicant groups must be 'mainly composed of producers',[3] but additional requirements exist in some of the member states. For example, in France, both GI and Label Rouge applicants must organise a nonprofit business entity, called an Organisme de Défense et de Gestion, to engage in the management of the quality sign (Bardenhagen et al., 2021; Marie-Vivien et al., 2019; Pick and Marie-Vivien, 2021). In the United States, GIs are held by state-level commodity groups that have farmer, packer, and processor representation (e.g. Idaho Potatoes). In other contexts, quality signs are organised by the state and simply provided to farmers and their industries for use (Marie-Vivien and Biénabe, 2017; Marie-Vivien et al., 2019).

[1] Regulation No. 1151/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 21 Nov. 2012 on Quality Schemes for Agricultural Products and Foodstuffs, 2012 O.J. (L. 343), page 8. The French-specific requirement can be found in the Code rural et de la pêche maritime [Rural and Maritime Fisheries Code] art. L642-17 (Fr.).

[2] https://www.wto.org/english/docs_e/legal_e/27-trips_01_e.htm

[3] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32012R1151

Despite their country-level variations, each quality sign effort involves a group of producers and typically additional actors at other stages in the value chain. A variety of terms are used to describe the actors involved in quality signs, but an agreed upon name has not so far emerged in the literature. Descriptions are elaborated on in various ways. Quinones-Ruiz et al. (2016) describe the actors involved in 'collective efforts' (p. 104, inter alia) with firms using 'representative bodies' (p. 114) for management. Pick and Marie-Vivien (2021) refer to 'producers' groups' and 'collective organisations' (p. 3). Sometimes quality sign groups are referred to simply as the 'brand owner' (Raynaud et al., 2005). Sauvee (2013) notes that defining the governance structure can be difficult, given the complexity of networks and organisational structures, and further describes the 'coordination architecture' as the authority that helps manage relationships between actors. Raynaud et al. (2009) note that the governance structure is the result of numerous contractual agreements that effectively develop a vertical coordination along the value chain. In defining governance, Vandecandelaere et al. (2020) describe '... some form of organisation (formal or informal) which collectively takes decisions on aspects related to the GI (at least those linked to production, but maybe also to marketing), and brings together all those involved in the value chain.' (p. 6). They go on to describe GI management as necessitating '... a local association of stakeholders in the value chain' who are collectively involved with the production rules (Vandecandelaere et al., 2020: 6). Additionally, 'stakeholder groups' is the term used in recent work from the FAO on GI systems (FAO & Origin, 2024).

For this study, we seek a unit of analysis that will allow us to investigate collectives engaged in quality sign production more broadly, to include existing quality sign production beyond that of GIs. Such collectives have been described by others as 'quality groups' (Bardenhagen et al., 2021; Westgren, 1999). Quality Groups (QGs) are associations of farmers and agricultural businesses involved in producing branded quality products. QGs develop intellectual property for a quality product by creating a set of specific production rules that will be used across the value chain (Westgren, 1999). Multiple categories of value chain actors, including farmers, packers, and processors, have the opportunity to provide input into the development of the initial rules and the ongoing management of the quality product's label (Bardenhagen et al., 2021).

Quality group, as a concept, captures much of the GI world but is also applicable to other quality sign efforts such as Label Rouge. As a more universal concept, it affords researchers the ability to analyse any group of farmers and value chain actors working together along a set of standards and intellectual property to promote and defend their product. The term quality group is, in fact, used regularly by practitioners in the French and international contexts (Personal comment, Chris Bardenhagen, 2024), adding support to its use in the scholarly research context.

QGs are considered to be a hybrid form of governance (Peterson, 2001; Menard, 2018; Menard and Valceschini, 2005). This is because they combine relational alliances (Gereffi et al., 2005) between value chain actors on the one hand, with a high level of control over production practices on the other. Menard (1996) identified Label Rouge QGs as hybrids early on. In QGs, inter-organisational contracts are made (e.g. the production rules), decision-making structures are created, and enforcement measures are built between the businesses involved — all of which are integral to hybrid arrangements (Menard, 1996; Menard, 2022). QGs would fit in the third-party type of hybrid described in Menard's (2022: 306) typology of hybrids because they are separate entities that coordinate rules and confirm compliance with the different businesses involved. Relatedly, because certain 'specific' assets are needed to transform a product to its final form (Muller et al., 2021), the value chains involved in QG hybrid arrangements include actors that have those specific assets.

It is however important to understand where a QG starts and where it stops. Because a QG association's purpose is to develop and manage the group's production and transformation rules and associated intellectual property, QGs do not themselves engage in commercial activity. Rather, their focus is to ensure that quality levels are maintained across the value chain. It is the business actors within QGs — farmers, processors, and

private slaughterhouses for example — that engage in the commercial activities of the value chain, buying and selling the product at different stages (Bardenhagen et al., 2021). In fact, many of these actors are in competition with one another, such as packing companies and cooperatives that frequently sell within the same supermarket channels (Menard, 2017, 2022). As such, QG associations are meso-institutions (Menard, 2024) that help farm and food businesses implement the rules of quality sign programmes or take advantage of intellectual property regulations.

In terms of value chain structure, branding and quality enforcement strategies on broader value chains have been studied by institutional/transaction cost economists (Menard, 2017; Raynaud et al., 2005; Raynaud et al., 2009), who note that perishability is a factor influencing whether a value chain will have a more vertical or a more market-based arrangement. Sauvee and Coulibaly (2008) identified external forces such as competition and consumer preferences as affecting the governance structure of branding alliances, of which QGs are a subset. But while Reviron and Chappuis (2011) found that several legal forms and organisational structures (interprofessional associations, professional associations, and cooperatives) can be utilised for GI QGs in Europe, the internal details of QGs have just begun to be uncovered.

In relation to organisational design, Quinones-Ruiz et al. (2016) have taken a deep look at the 'black box' of GI registration processes for several QG cases, comparing the time spent by various actors and the duration of the registration process, and considering differences across legal/international contexts. Guerrieri and Marie-Vivien (2022) investigated how control plans affect collective decisions and QG governance, concerning one similar type of agricultural product produced by different groups under different quality sign programmes. In both of the above studies, comparative legal methods were utilised, including document analysis of statutes (bylaws), product specifications, and control plans (Guerrieri and Marie-Vivien, 2022; Quinones-Ruiz et al., 2016). These methods present an effective approach at QG analysis because each of these documents is developed collectively by the actors involved in the QG.

Research questions

There is still a large gap in knowledge on the internal structures and decision-making systems of QGs. The relative positions of value-chain actors within these hybrid arrangements need investigation to identify arrangements that are more or less functional for farmers' interests. This information can assist farmers, practitioners, and researchers working on value-chain development efforts to build more equitable systems. As GIs are touted as an equitable rural development tool (Crescenzi et al., 2022), it is important that we begin to analyse the power dynamics involved between farmers, processors, and other actors within them.

An explanation of factors leading to differences in structures between groups is also needed, to better understand why groups are organised the way they are. Relatedly, the points at which involvement in a quality sign production begins and where it ends need to be defined. This is because the farmers and downstream operators in these groups are often involved in other production modes (conventional production systems, non-labeled production, related products etc.). Knowledge in this area will help practitioners better understand where and how a quality group effort could be a good fit.

To fill these knowledge gaps, we used the following research question to guide our study of QGs:

- What are the decision-making systems in QGs, and the relative decision-making weight of the farmers and other actors within the QGs?
- Important sub-questions to address this main research question are:
- Which value chain actors are involved in QGs; in other words, what part of the value chain is captured in the QG, and what part is external?
- What major factors affect QG structure?

Using these questions, our research contributes knowledge on the types of decision-making structures and

the power differentials found between different actors in QGs. Applying these questions to QG cases enabled us to develop a typology of QGs, based on their different internal value chain structures and organisational decision-making systems. By analysing a number of cases of production of quality products, we identify categories of QGs having similar characteristics. A typology can help to predict the internal characteristics that are likely to be found in QGs experiencing common factors or circumstances. The identification of different types of QG can provide starting points for local investigation, and can enable practitioners to strategise ahead on development projects to achieve more equitable outcomes.

METHODOLOGY

For this study, we mix qualitative research with legal methods, including document research and comparative legal analysis. Our focus on legal analysis follows methods used by Guerrieri and Marie-Vivien (2022) and Quinones-Ruiz et al. (2016). We consider the QG to be defined by its membership and by who is contractually obligated. This information is found in the organisational documents of the QG, including the statutes (a similar document to bylaws in the United States), the product specifications, and the control plan. A QG's decision-making processes and the level of different actors' voting rights are codified in these documents.

Additionally, quality signs, including GIs, are intellectual property rights based in country-level legal frameworks which are harmonised to a large extent by international agreements. This intellectual property is owned by or licensed to QGs, which use it collectively to promote their product and defend against usurpation. Because QGs are fundamentally about organising to develop collective intellectual property rights, a legal/qualitative mix affords deep insight. Our legal/qualitative approach resonates with concepts presented in Williamson's (1991) analysis of 'discrete structural alternatives' of governance forms, which recognises the influence of law on business organisation (e.g., company law, contract law, intellectual property regulations). We use qualitative methods to investigate QGs, because they each represent a different approach to economic organisation that has emerged to deal with unique market and production challenges.

Context and Case Selection

To begin to answer our research questions, we conducted research on French quality groups across a diversity of product types and value-chain characteristics. France was chosen as the context for several reasons: it has a voluminous food quality product industry, with nearly 6 billion euros of sales of geographical indication (PGIs and PDOs) and Label Rouge products in 2020 (INAO, 2021), covering in total about 1,200 different quality products. This enabled us to work with products across a wide variety of agricultural sectors. French law is also well-developed in regard to both quality sign programming and the regulation of quality group organisations, providing consistency across cases that facilitates structural comparison. The following are a few examples of French mandates: French QGs must have their full body of members (assemblée générale) vote annually on the fee levels that will be imposed on producers and other actors;[4] only certain business entities may be used for QGs to keep them non-profit in nature (Bardenhagen et al., 2021); and the French Institut national de l'origine et de la qualité (INAO) regulations impose a level of democratic functioning and balance in industry representation so that QGs are not exclusionary.[5]

Our multidisciplinary research design utilised a case study approach (Sterns et al., 1998; Yin, 2013) to comprehensively assess internal structure and value chain operation, taking the quality group as the unit of analysis. We chose a sample of cases in consultation with French officials who work with QGs at both local and national level, as well as with researchers who study French food value chains. In this way, we were able to identify cases that would represent the breadth of QG types across products, value chain volumes, and market scopes. While there was potential for bias in case selection due to our purposeful sampling, our process of identification and consultation was intended to develop a representative cross-section of QGs.

[4] See Code rural et de la pêche maritime art. L-642-25.

[5] See Code rural et de la pêche maritime art. L-642-18; see also Institut National de l'Origin et de le Qualité, INAO-DJR-1009-03 Rév. 1, Suivi des conditions de reconnaissance ODG [Monitoring of ODG recognition conditions] (2011).

Data Gathering and Sampling

To collect data, we conducted semi-structured interviews with quality group managers, farmers, and other value-chain actors. Semi-structured interviews allowed us to obtain in-depth information from the perspective of the actors themselves, in a way that would leave ample room for both expected and unexpected answers, and allow for comparison among interviewees' responses. Interviews were generally held at the interviewees' place of business, in the different French regions. We gathered organisational documents from the QG managers, including the statutes, product specifications, control plan, and internal rules (règlement intérieur) as applicable and available.

We obtained organisational documents and conducted interviews with actors from 12 QGs, with a total of 31 managers, board members, and farmers interviewed. Six QGs were based in southern France and six in central France.[6] Furthermore, 18 key informants were also interviewed, including French officials, regional agents, researchers, and professional support, including one attorney. Our interviewee sample enabled us to reach a saturation of concepts, as our final interviews added very little additional information, substantially reiterating concepts previously identified.

Our analysis was also informed by studying numerous other cases in France, including reviewing publicly available filing documents from INAO's website. These documents often state information about the value-chain actors involved and the rules for production. QGs' promotional websites often provide detailed information about their members, and in some cases provide the statutes of the organisation.

Analysis

We used qualitative analysis techniques, including concept identification, coding, theming, and summarising (Chung, 2000). Inspired by the grounded theory approach (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Peterson, 2011), we explored the data throughout the interview period, using it to inform and improve our interviewing. During the analysis, we focused on listening to the data in order to develop salient concepts and metrics. This allowed us to identify recurring aspects of internal structure and decision-making systems within QGs, as well as the factors that might lead to different organisational characteristics. We incorporated legal metrics into our qualitative analysis techniques (coding, theming, and summarising) to assess each QG is organised and how its value chain functions. Comparative analysis was further used to analyse differing organisational design aspects found in the QGs' statutes.

To help categorise and better understand the complex relationships we found (Taran et al., 2015; Margiono et al., 2018), we identified a number of emergent types of QGs in our data. To do so, we synthesised the factors that led to different value chain structures (product chain length, mode of processing, and distribution mode) with the different decision-making systems we found.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

There was a wide product range in our sample of QGs, including poultry, red meats, cheeses, fruits, vegetables, and horticulture products such as flowers. Market scopes were also varied. In certain QGs, actors focus on national distribution through supermarket chains, while in others, they focus on local and direct markets. The value chains involved in many QGs have a regional scope and/or a mix of local, regional, and national markets. Table 1 below illustrates the variety of markets that are utilised by the actors within the QGs that we studied in-depth.

[6] Note that our sample did not include wine and spirit QGs which, as a sector, has unique rules and structural characteristics.

Table 1. Number of QG value chains engaging in various markets (sample of 12)

	Direct Market (farmer's markets, restaurants, on-farm)	**Specialty Market** (cheese shops, butcheries, etc.)	**Supermarket**
Local	5	6	2
Regional	3	6	9
National	-	5	5

The processes used to transform the product to sellable form also varied. In some cases, high volumes of a product are aggregated through packers, processors, and slaughterhouses, while in others there is a focus on on-farm processing or packing. Some groups had a mix of both.

Value Chain Actors

The scope of QG membership varies. While some have only farmers as official members, others have farmers, first processors, second processors, including fruit and vegetable packers, cheese makers, cheese ripeners, and abattoirs (slaughterhouses) as members. Cooperatives play a big part in many QGs. They can help aggregate raw products or live animals to get to the next step, and in some cases they perform downstream activities such as packing and cheesemaking. The total number of farmers involved in each of the QGs we sampled ranged from 7 to about 2500, with most of the groups having between 75 and 280 farmers.

In most cases, businesses that are upstream from farmers are not involved in the QG as a member. Feed millers and chick hatcheries, for examples, will provide feed and genetics that meet the requirements of the product specifications, but the transactions are at arms-length. We did find an example where upstream actors were voting members of the QG, but this is uncommon.

Distributors and retailers are rarely involved as members at the QG level, but we did find a number of strong connections. First, we found one example of a retailer being involved as a member at the QG level, for non-food agricultural products, and in this case the retailer was performing a step outlined in the product specifications. In a second example, we found a QG that required specialty retailers to sign a brief contract detailing the presentation of the product in their stores, to ensure the products were marketed with the proper promotional materials. Furthermore, while there is a substantial amount of marketing of QG products through retailer brands in France, from our sample these seem to be mainly private label contracts, such that the retailer does not have a place inside the QG membership. However, in the cheese industry, there are processors involved in some QGs that are subsidiaries of large retailers.

Factors Affecting Quality Group Makeup

The factors we found to be consistently associated with differences in structure were: a) product type/ chain length; b) production mode; and c) distribution mode. Individually, these factors do not fully explain the structure of a value chain within a QG. However, when we applied them in combination to the QGs in our sample, the categories in our typology began to emerge. We first describe these factors.

a) Product type/chain length

Product characteristics are critical, albeit often overlooked, factors for organisational structure. The number of steps needed to move from a raw product to a sellable form helps determine which value chain actors will be involved in the production. Food safety considerations and the perishability level of a product influence this element. Here we consider two main categories of product type: long production chain, where a higher

number of processing steps is required to achieve a sellable form, and short production chain, where only one or two steps are needed to market the product.

Long production chain. Meats and especially cheeses require several actions and processes before they can be marketed. Cheeses, for example, must go through a multi-step process after milk is collected, including curdling, shaping, and ripening. With meats, they need to be procured, processed, and cooled within a short period of time. While in some QG cases these processes are completed on farm, in many QGs multiple, separate downstream value chain actors are necessary (e.g. processors, ripeners).

Short production chain. Fruits and vegetables require grading, packing, and storage, but do not require further processing or transformation to be sold in their highest value form7. Downstream processing and transformation actors are therefore not necessary, and so do not need to be members of the QG. Commercialisation of the products is conducted either by farmers individually or by the packers who sell to distributors.

b) Processing mode

The processing mode predominantly used in a value chain affects the QG's type significantly. The two main modes we find are on-farm processing, where steps are conducted by the farmer, and off-farm processing, where raw products are brought to downstream operators for processing or packing. Some QGs have actors engaging in both.

On-farm processing. The QGs that include farmers engaged in on-farm processing are, in the cases we studied, all focused on artisanal production. This type of production utilises traditional methods and often requires high levels of management per unit. Additionally, on-farm processing requires all the equipment and other specific assets needed for production to be located on the farm, including the processing equipment (such as for slaughtering), storage equipment (such as for cooling or drying), and sorting equipment, as well as all of the facilities needed to house that production in a food-safe manner. For example, farm-based cheese producers conduct all the steps from animal rearing and pasturing to milk gathering, cheese making, and cheese ripening. The equipment used for on-farm processing is normally smaller scale, which generally limits the volume of output.

Off-farm processing. Off-farm processing can enable higher levels of volume. Off-farm processing businesses, some of which are farmer-owned cooperatives, invest in larger-scale equipment and facilities that can efficiently process, pack, and store the product. These assets enable the product uniformity and volumes demanded by large retailers. Due to their strong involvement in the production steps, these businesses become QG members and are involved in the decision making, especially regarding the product specifications and control plan. Note that in most of these cases, ownership of the product is transferred from the farmer to the processor and, where relevant, from the first processor to the second processor at delivery. Generally, the most downstream business commercialises and markets the product. Consequently, farmers in QGs that are engaged in mostly off-farm processing are dependent on their downstream actors: processors, ripeners, and abattoirs (James, Hendrickson, and Howard 2013).

Hybrid. We found several hybrid QG cases whose value chains included both on-farm and off-farm processing. This existence of downstream actors enables artisanal farmers to enter new markets or produce higher volumes of a product. For these farmers, fewer resources are spent on on-farm processing, leaving more resources and time available for production of the raw product.

[7] Processed fruit and vegetable products such as applesauce can be important as secondary products, but do not obtain the highest values.

c) Distribution mode

The channels and venues through which the products in a value chain reach customers have a large impact on QG type. Here we identify three modes of distribution: supermarket focused, specialised-market focused, and local distribution.

Supermarket-focused. The main marketing venue is supermarkets, sold regionally or nationally through larger-scale distributors or directly to retailers. Large volumes of product are linked with this marketing mode, to satisfy the scale of distribution.

Specialised market-focused.[8] Products are delivered nationally, but to smaller retailers focused on meats, cheeses, or fresh fruits and vegetables, often in urban areas.

Local distribution: Farmers sell their products directly to consumers at farmers' markets or on their farms, and/or to local retailers, including specialised-marketers such as cheese shops.

Note that these modes are not mutually exclusive. For example, farmers in supermarket-focused groups often sell a portion of their products at farmstands or farmers' markets. That said, the bulk of the production of a quality product in a QG will tend to be distributed through one of these modes. The exception is the hybrid chains, where the QG actors include both on-farm and off-farm processing, and where there is a more even split between national, specialised markets and local markets.

Decision-making Systems and Farmers' Weight

Each of the QGs we studied had both a General Assembly and a Board of Directors (Conseil d'Administration). These two decision-making bodies are fundamental to membership-based associations in France (Association Loi de 1901, Syndicates), similar to membership-based non-profit associations and cooperatives in common-law systems such as the United States. The General Assembly is the larger body, where members are able to express their voice and vote on fundamental decisions. QGs are structured such that annually, the members elect their board members and vote on user fees (cotisations).

Farmers are often direct members of the General Assembly, but in a fair number of cases, especially where large numbers of farmers and product volumes are present, farmers will be represented by their cooperatives or other producer groups. In certain situations, the population of the General Assembly can be largely similar to that of the Board of Directors, with the same individuals serving on both. However, depending on the case, this might speak to a lack of farmer engagement rather than issues with the overall organisational structure. Farmer engagement is robust in some QGs, but a challenge in others.

The board of directors, elected from the membership, does most of the ongoing organisational work and provides oversight to the paid manager of the ODG. Often in the statutes of the organisation, the board is given fairly broad powers to manage the ongoing matters of the business. In practice, the board will also spend time and effort developing strategies, which they will present to the members for approval. Annually, the board will provide updates on volumes, sales, and other key figures.

Many QGs are divided into colleges that are natural, given their membership. Some colleges are as simple as 'upstream' and 'downstream', grouping those actors together for common meeting and decision-making purposes. In other cases, those categories are broken down further, for instance, farmers doing on-farm versus off-farm processing; or cheesemaker processors (transformateurs) versus ripeners (affineurs). Often the colleges will each have a number of board seats allocated to them, detailed in the statutes. This number is often set by a formula based on production volumes, with limits to ensure that a balanced representation of farmers exists.

[8] 'Specialised' refers to small, upscale vendors selling only particular products (cheeses, meats, or fruits and vegetables.)

The decision-making systems of QGs can therefore range from simple to quite complex. However, in each QG the upstream or farmer side had at least 50% of the vote in both the General Assembly and the Board. Again, the upstream side might include cooperative representatives versus the farmers themselves, but those cooperatives have their own democratic decision-making structures. We did find several QGs where farmers had 100% of the vote in both bodies. The decision-making systems and levels of farmer voting power we found in the different QGs seemed to track several types, which we describe in the typology below.

Typology

In applying the structural factors and decision-making systems described above to the QG cases we studied, we identified several types. These types matched with the themes we discovered through our coding process, as well as those observed through our in-person meetings and from general information gathering about the QGs. The four main types we observed were large-volume animal product QGs, large-volume short production chain QGs, artisanal animal product QGs, and producer-focused QGs. These and some variations on these types are presented below.

Large-volume animal product QGs. This type of QG is concerned with production of meats, cheeses, eggs, and other animal products. While we did not observe any in our sample, additional milk products such as yogurt could fit in this type. Long production chains are involved due to the product type. High volumes are processed and marketed through off-farm processors and other downstream actors. These efficient downstream actors can provide the product uniformity, packaging expertise, and volumes per order that are needed to work with supermarket chains, regionally and nationally.

On the farm side, there is enough aggregate volume between the farmers involved to necessitate downstream actors and supermarket buyers, to move their products. While the focus is on quality production, industrial processes and marketing channels are utilised.

The decision making is often split in these groups, 50% farm side (upstream), and 50% downstream. This is true for both bodies, the General Assembly and the Board. The voting power is usually determined based on volumes, for example one vote for so many head of animals. On the upstream side, cooperatives are often involved, aggregating farmers' products and negotiating on their behalf. In many cases, the cooperatives are the voting members of the QG, representing their farmers. On the downstream side, the processors and packers play a very important part and have a large stake in the outcome of the quality product, often marketing the product to distributors and retailers. This provides negotiating power during the organisation of the QG, leading to substantial voting weights.[9]

Figure 1 illustrates an example of an organisational decision-making schema, built drawing from several examples of meat-focused QG cases. France has many of these types of QGs, due in large part to the Label Rouge programme.

Large-volume short production chain QGs. This type of QG has actors producing large volumes of products with shorter production chains. These products include fruits and vegetables, but may also include grains (wheat, flour) and horticultural products such as flowers. Many farmers work together, often through cooperatives, to produce the volumes needed to sell to supermarket buyers regionally and nationally. Grading and packing are the only steps needed to prepare the product for sale. However, volumes necessitate modern, large-scale equipment capable of grading and packing to supermarket standards. The packing and cooling equipment is located off-farm to facilitate space and distribution via semi-trucks. Cooperatives can be the packer, in which case they are both an upstream and a downstream actor.

[9] Note, however, that farmers and cooperatives can be part owners of these downstream operators, especially seen with slaughterhouses (Paybou, 2000).

Downstream actors can have a substantial amount of decision-making power in these QGs. However, these QGs are more farmer-centric than the large-volume animal product QGs, because fewer downstream actors

Figure 1. Large-volume meat quality group organisational structure

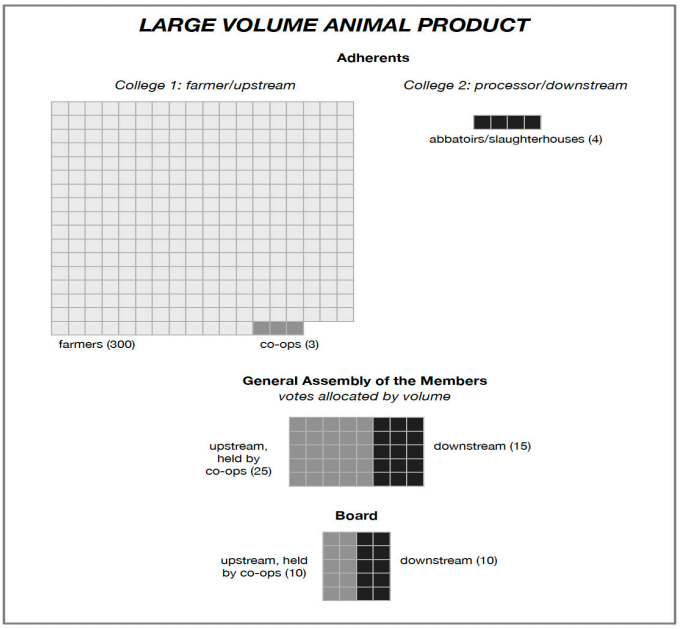
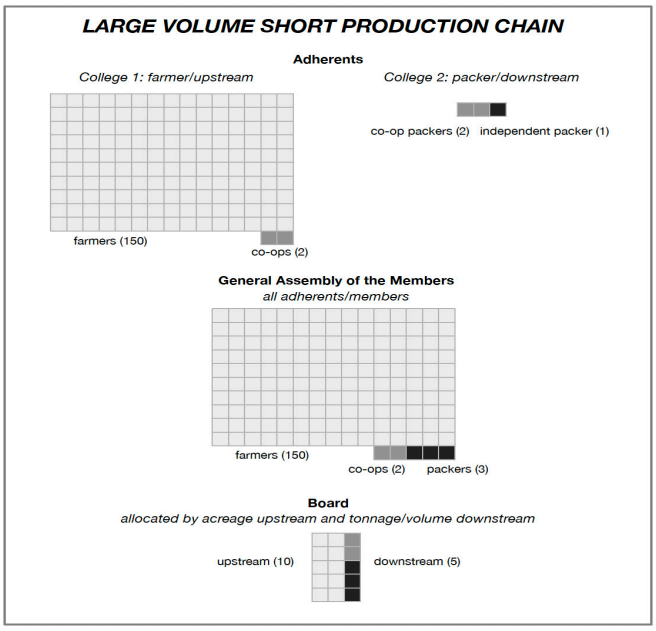


Figure 2. Large-volume, short production chain quality group organisational structure



are involved. Furthermore, where packing is done by the farmers' cooperatives, the farmers have even more voice in the aggregate, through their vote in the cooperative.

The farmers themselves can be members of the General Assembly and vote in it directly. In our sample, farmer/upstream board seats were determined by acreage, and board seats allocated by tonnage on the packer side. Minimum proportions of farmers on the board can be implemented, for example a rule that two-thirds of board seats must be held by farmers. Although we had only a small sample, this type has a very balanced decision-making system and value-chain structure, potentially replicable by groups with large numbers of farmers organised in cooperatives in both developed and developing contexts.

Figure 2 illustrates an example structure for a fruit or vegetable QG, drawn from our sample.

Artisanal animal product QGs. This type of QG concerns animal products such as raw meats and cheeses. The production within these QGs, at its base, is artisanal, meaning it is produced with customary, passed-down methods, often with smaller-scale equipment and traditional technologies. Due to the nature of the products, multiple steps are needed, for example milk processing, cheesemaking, and ripening. Volumes of artisanal products, while substantial, are mid-scale or lower.

The marketing scope includes both local sales and distribution through specialty retailers, including meat and cheese markets around the country. Farmers focused on local sales do the processing steps on-farm. However, to develop the mid-scale volumes and product consistency needed for national specialty distribution, downstream actors are involved. In our sample, farmers tend to engage in either on-farm processing or off-farm processing, but not both. This is likely due to the relatively high cost of processing equipment and the food-safe building space needed to use it. Farmers presumably either maximise their use of the equipment, or else maximise the amount of artisanal products they produce, rather than buying the equipment.

Farmers had a strong majority of decision-making power in our sample of QGs of this type. The farmers

can be split into colleges, based on whether they engage in on-farm processing or not. Farmers are direct members in the General Assembly, as are downstream actors, but given the 1member 1vote setup, the very large balance of voting power in this body is with the farmers.
As downstream actors are an important part of the value chain, they are involved as members in the QG. They have less of a presence than the downstream actors in large-volume animal product QGs, and consequently less voting weight as well. However, at the board level, processors are still provided a substantial amount of voting power, for example one-third.

Figure 3 shows an example organisational structure for an artisanal-focused QG, averaged from some of the QGs in our sample. This type of QG may be most prevalent in southern Europe, where PDOs are abundant.

Figure 3. Artisanal animal product quality group organisational structure.

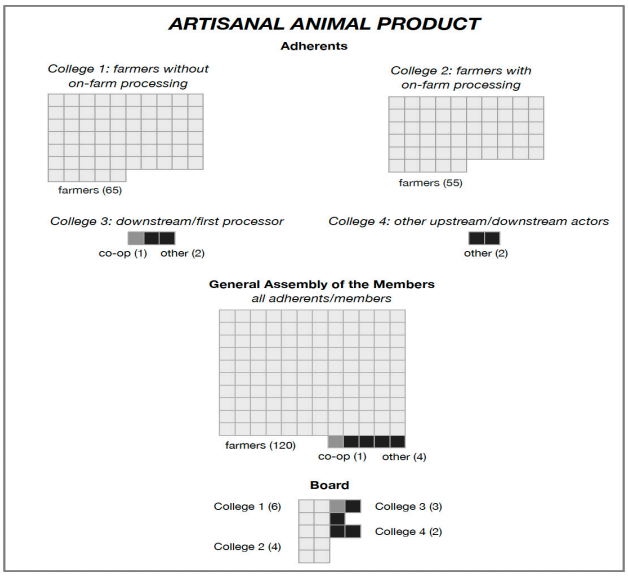
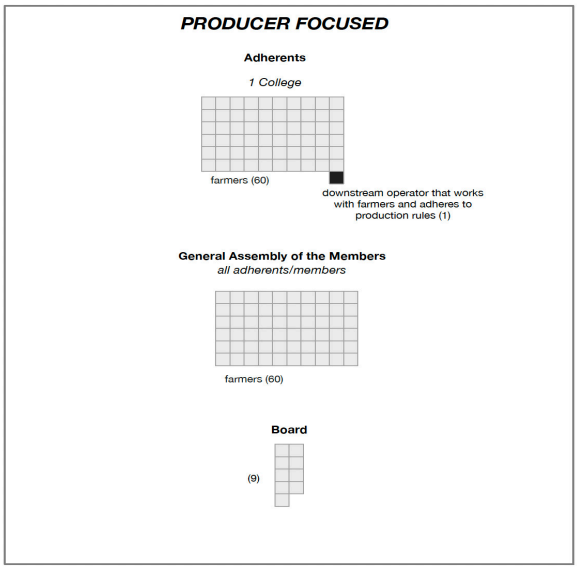


Figure 4. Producer-focused quality group organisational schema



Producer-focused QGs. Producer-focused QGs can potentially concern any product type, for examples meats, vegetables, cheeses, and fruits. We saw examples of both long and short production chains. Processing and packing steps can be both on-farm and off-farm, and our sample included groups engaging in strictly local production as well as those working with national-level specialty distribution by contracting with local packers. Production was artisanal in most of our cases of this type, but larger-volume farmers could also potentially utilise this organisational design.

The entire membership of all of these producer-focused QGs is made up of farmers. The General Assembly follows a 1member, 1vote rule. Members of the board are all farmers selected from the General Assembly. Decision-making was 100% farmer based in the QGs in our sample of this type.

Figure 4 illustrates an example producer-focused QG. While simplified in terms of value-chain actors, the QG association itself will still perform the same functions as other types of QGs: development of specifications, promotion of the product, oversight of actors, and defence of the quality sign.

Variations

Some variations were seen from these main types. We also hypothesise about a number of other variations.

It is not unusual for QGs to manage more than one quality sign, for example a poultry QG might cover related chicken, duck, and egg labels for its members. In our sample, we also studied two QGs that work

with different groups of producers to cover different products. At face value, these groups are outliers, but in reality the difference may not be that big. This is because essentially these are just multiple quality groups working under one organisational umbrella. The difference in the cases in our sample is that the production is carried out by a smaller number of value-chain actors working with larger-volume retailers. Members include processors and farmer-packers.

A variation that we hypothesise will be seen is producer-focused QGs having one or more downstream operators as per-se members. In such a situation, the operator would have a vote, though it would be a small percentage of the overall decision-making power. This situation may occur because the product specifications often place requirements on a downstream step with which that operator must comply. However, such an inclusion in the structure would not be likely to substantially change the dynamic, compared to producer-focused QGs where farmers work with packers by contract.

Finally, GI-related handicraft production is carried out by artisans across different contexts. We did not have handicraft QGs in our sample but would expect them to have a producer-focused organisational design. A QG of this type might include an important marketer or a producer cooperative. Such an actor might be a voting member as mentioned above, or work with producers by contract.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

In order to provide a consistent and structured context, this study focused on QG cases in France. Our efforts to develop a representative cross-section of QGs did produce robust differences, but there was a potential for bias in our sampling methods. Our 12 in-depth cases and more limited review of numerous other QGs in France provide a wide breadth of diversity in value-chain structures and decision-making systems, but this typology would benefit from testing on more cases for validation, across different countries and contexts. We nevertheless suggest that value chains have similarities across international contexts, due to the practices necessary for producing specific products (Lee et al., 2010), even where production infrastructure is lacking or in need of upgrading (Trienekens, 2011). Relatedly, as meso-instutions (Menard, 2024), QGs are bound to have many similar characteristics due to their effort to negotiate between farmers and production businesses, and their applicable macro-institutions. Therefore, it is likely that our typology will be useful and apply as a starting point for groups in other contexts, especially for identifying the types of value chain actors involved or not within them, and for identifing QGs' basic activities. Our caveat is that the decision-making power is likely to vary by context, based on the level of property rights enforcement, background instututions, and power differentials that exist.

Future research efforts related to QG types should consider factors that might cause differences across such contexts. For example, development efforts can experience differing levels of state involvement in development and management (Marie-Vivien et al., 2019; Pick and Marie-Vivien, 2021). How does this affect decision-making systems and outcomes for farmers? Another factor to consider is how the existing political economy of the region at the time of development affects the shape of the value chain structure, potentially influencing which actors became involved in the QG. These are important policy considerations to help guide future GIs and other agricultural value chain development research and efforts.

Our research did not include QGs focused on wines and spirits. Such QGs are somewhat unique due to the structure of their industries and certain legal requirements. While much of this study will apply to wine and spirit QGs, the typology may not be completely transferrable.

CONCLUSIONS

Through the development of a typology, we discovered various combinations of value-chain structures and decision-making weights found between actors in QGs. The types we identified are: large-volume animal

product QGs; large-volume short production chain QGs; artisanal animal product QGs; and producer-focused QGs. Our results also illustrate different types of decision-making structures and areas of power differentials involved in QGs. Our typology serves as a potentially valuable tool for future research and analysis of QGs, especially for investigating governance design and the negotiating power of farmers in relation to other actors. We identified several key factors contributing to differences between QG's internal structures and decision-making systems. Although certain contextual factors, such as in situ competition levels or a country's contract enforcement levels, can potentially result in differences, we expect the following factors to affect QG types across broader contexts: a) product type/chain length; b) processing mode (on- or off-farm processing); and c) distribution mode. These factors are embedded in our typology, which is the main contribution of this paper.

We found that organisational decision-making systems range from evenly split between upstream and downstream actors, to fully controlled by farmers. For QGs whose members work with substantial volumes of products, cooperatives often comprise a substantial part of the QG structure, along with downstream actors such as abattoirs. These results align with those of Paybou (2000), who conducted comprehensive interviews and analysis of six important QGs in the French Label Rouge poultry industry, and Quinones-Ruiz et al. (2016), who found a similar set of value-chain actors in their study of quality-sign registration efforts. Similar to Guerrieri and Marie-Vivien (2022), we found that QGs working with similar products can have differences in organisational design, based on which actors are involved and who leads the initial quality-sign effort.

The identification of product type as a major factor in value-chain organisation is consistent with the conclusions of Raynaud et al. (2005) and Raynaud et al. (2009). More perishable products generally require either short production chains to move them quickly, or additional value chain actors to enable processing into storable form. Our results are also consistent with Gereffi et al. (2005) and Muller et al. (2020), because we found that specific assets, and the value chain actors that own those assets, to be strongly determinant of both production-chain length and processing mode.

Our research contributes to the literature stream on hybrids and new institutional/transaction-cost economics because we help to identify why QGs do not usually correspond to the strategic centre zone of the typology presented by Menard (2022). As separate, third-party entities, QGs must comply with the legal rules for non-profit business associations, which are generally required to have purposes that are not pecuniary per se. Furthermore, certain member-state regulations (e.g. France) stipulate that QGs themselves cannot engage in commercial activities such as producing, buying, or selling quality products. Regulations on GI certification marks in the United States have the same prohibition10. That is not to say that such formal strategic investments are not pursued similarly to those of other value chains. Instead of utilising the QG association for this, value-chain actors in these groups can invest in commonly held strategic assets using cooperatives, joint ventures, and other vehicles. We found several cross-ownership situations where farmers and/or their cooperatives have some percentage of ownership in downstream operators, including abattoirs (Paybou, 2000). In these cases, dual hybrids are being used: the third party type (QGs) and the strategic centre type (joint ventures in specific assets).

Finally, an important contribution of this research is to establish the quality group as a practical and useful unit of analysis. As a unit with legal boundaries, the QG provides a common structure for analysis of different economic actors' influences and rights, both inside groups and between groups. The QG unit also has potential for comparatively analysing groups between various country contexts, as meso-institutions negotiating underlying national, federal, international laws (Menard, 2024).

To conclude, our research provides an important next step for analysis of GIs and other quality labels, which together present a specific type of value-chain organisation. While much value-chain research applies to GIs

[10] See the United States Patent and Trademark Office's Trademark Manual of Examining Procedure, §1306.01(a)

generally, the QG is a unique and important unit of analysis that is core to the operation of GI projects. Our typology should help predict value-chain actor relationships for GI development initiatives, and inform efforts to optimise work with existing GI quality groups.

REFERENCES

Bardenhagen, C.J., Howard, P.H. and Nozières-Petit, M.O. (2021) France's organisme de défense et de gestion: a model for farmer collective action through standard development and brand management, Journal of Food Law & Policy, 17(2), pp. 1–40.

Cei, L., Defrancesco, E. and Stefani, G. (2018) From geographical indications to rural development: a review of the economic effects of European Union policy. Sustainability, 10(10), 3745.

Chung, K. (2000) Qualitative data collection techniques. In Designing Household Survey Questionnaires for Developing Countries. Washington, DC: World Bank.

Crescenzi, R., De Filippis, F., Giua, M. and Vaquero-Piñeiro, C. (2022) Geographical Indications and local development: the strength of territorial embeddedness. Regional Studies, 56(3), pp. 381-393.

Food and Agriculture Organization and Origin (2024) Developing a roadmap towards increased sustainability in geographical indication systems: practical guidelines for producer organizations to identify priorities, assess performance and improve the sustainability of their geographical indication systems, Food and Agriculture Organization, Rome. https://doi.org/10.4060/cc9122en

Gereffi, G., Humphrey, J. and Sturgeon, T. (2005) The governance of global value chains, Review of International Political Economy, 12(1), pp. 78–104.

Glaser, B.G. and Strauss, A.L. (1967) The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research. Chicago, IL: Aldine.

Guerrieri, F. and Marie-Vivian, D. (2022) The control plan of agricultural and non-agricultural GIs : the Cinderella of collective action?, Worldwide Perspectives on Geographical Indications Conference, CIRAD, Montpellier, France. hal-03791217

Institute National De l'Origin et de la Qualité (2021) Les Produits sous Signe d'Identification de la Qualité et de l'Origine Chiffres-Clés 2020. French Ministry of Agriculture. https://www.inao.gouv.fr/Publications/Donnees-et-cartes/Informations-economiques

James, H.S., Hendrickson, M.K. and Howard, P.H. (2013) Networks, power and dependency in the agrifood industry, in: H.S. James (ed.) The Ethics and Economics of Agrifood Competition. Dordrecht: Springer.

Lee, J., Gereffi, G. and Beauvais, J. (2012) Global value chains and agrifood standards: challenges and possibilities for smallholders in developing countries, Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 109(31), pp.12326-12331.

Margiono, A., Zolin, R. and Chang, A. (2018) A typology of social venture business model configurations, International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research, 24(3), pp. 626–650. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEBR-09-2016-0316.

Marie-Vivien, D. and Biénabe, E. (2017) The multifaceted role of the state in the protection of Geographical Indications: a worldwide review, World Development, 98, pp. 1–11. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2017.04.035.

Marie-Vivien, D., Carimentrand, A., Fournier, S., Cerdan, C. and Sautier, D. (2019) Controversies around Geographical Indications: are democracy and representativeness the solution?, British Food Journal, 121(12), pp. 2995–3010. https://doi.org/10.1108/BFJ-04-2019-0242.

Menard, C. (1996) On clusters, hybrids, and other strange forms: the case of the French poultry industry. Journal of Institutional and Theoretical Economics (JITE)/Zeitschrift für die gesamte Staatswissenschaft, pp.154-183.

Menard, C. (2017) Finding our way in the jungle: insights from organization theory, in: G. Martino, K. Karantininis, S. Pascussi, L. Dries and J.M. Codron (eds) It's a Jungle Out There–the Strange Animals of Economic Organization in Agri-Food Value Chains. Wageningen Academic Publishers, pp. 124-139.

Menard, C. (2018) Organization and governance in the agri-food sector: how can we capture their variety?, Agribusiness, 34(1), pp. 142-160.

Menard, C. (2022) Hybrids: where are we?, Journal of Institutional Economics, 18(2), pp. 297-312.

Menard, C., Martino, G., de Oliveira, G. M., Royer, A., Schnaider, P. S. B., & Saes, M. S. M. (2024) How is food safety regulation implemented? the key role of meso-institutions assessed through a cross-country comparison. Food Security, 16, pp. 1045-1058.

Menard, C. and Valceschini, E. (2005) New institutions for governing the agri-food industry, European Review of Agricultural Economics, 32(3), pp. 421–440.

Muller, P., Böhm, M., Csillag, P., Donati, M., Drut, M., Ferrer-Pérez, H., Gauvrit, L. et al. (2021) Are certified supply chains more socially sustainable? A bargaining power analysis, Journal of Agricultural & Food Industrial Organization, 19(2), pp. 177–192.

Paybou, F. (2000) Technical and economic feasibility study of adopting French Label Rouge poultry systems to Illinois, Master Thesis, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.

Peterson, C.H (2001) Strategic choice along the vertical coordination continuum. The International Food and Agribusiness Management Review, 4(2), pp.149–166. https://doi.org/10.1016/S1096-7508(01)00079-9.

Peterson, C.H. (2011) An epistemology for agribusiness: peers, methods and engagement in the agri-food bio system, International Food and Agribusiness Management Review, 14(5), pp. 11-26.

Pick, B. and Marie-Vivien, D. (2021) Representativeness in Geographical Indications: a comparison between the state-driven and producer-driven systems in Vietnam and France, Sustainability, 13(9), pp. 1-16. https://doi.org/10.3390/su13095056.

Quinones-Ruiz, X.F., Penker, M., Belletti, G., Marescotti, A., Scaramuzzi, S., Barzini, E., Pircher, M., Leitgeb, F. and Samper-Gartner, L.F. (2016) Insights into the black box of collective efforts for the registration of Geographical Indications, Land Use Policy, 57, pp.103-116.

Raynaud, E., Sauvee, L. and Valceschini, E. (2005) Alignment between quality enforcement devices and governance structures in the agro-food vertical chains, Journal of Management & Governance, 9(1), pp. 47–77. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10997-005-1571-1.

Raynaud, E., Sauvee, L. and Valceschini, E. (2009) Aligning branding strategies and governance of vertical transactions in agri-food chains, Industrial and Corporate Change, 18(5), pp. 835–868. https://doi.org/10.1093/icc/dtp026.

Reviron, S. and Chappuis, J.M. (2011) Geographical Indications: collective organization and management, in: E. Barham and B. Sylvander (eds) Labels of Origin for Food: Local Development, Global Recognition, United Kingdom: Cabi Wallingford, pp. 45-62.

Sauvee, L. and Coulibaly, M. (2008) The interorganizational dynamics of brand alliances. In: 24th IMP Conference, Uppsala, Sweden.

Sauvee, L. (2013) Hybrid governance: Sketching discrete alternatives. Journal on Chain and Network Science, 13(1), pp.1-10.

Schermer, M., Renting, H. and Oostindie, H. (2011) Collective farmers' marketing initiatives in Europe: diversity, contextuality and dynamics, The International Journal of Sociology of Agriculture and Food, 18(1), pp.1-11.

Sterns, J.A., Schweikhardt, D.B. and Peterson, C.H. (1998) Using case studies as an approach for conducting agribusiness research, The International Food and Agribusiness Management Review, 1(3), pp. 311–327.

Taran, Y., Boer, H. and Lindgren, P. (2015) A business model innovation typology, Decision Sciences, 46(2), pp. 301–331. https://doi.org/10.1111/deci.12128.

Trienekens, J.H. (2011) Agricultural value chains in developing countries a framework for analysis. International Food and Agribusiness Management Review, 14(2), pp.51-82.

Vandecandelaere, E., Teyssier, C., Barjolle, D., Fournier, S., Beucherie, O. and Jeanneaux, P. (2020) Strengthening sustainable food systems through geographical indications: evidence from 9 worldwide case studies. Journal of Sustainability Research, 4(3).

Westgren, R.E. (1999) Delivering food safety, food quality, and sustainable production practices: the Label Rouge poultry system in France, American Journal of Agricultural Economics, 81(5), pp. 1107–1111. https://doi.org/10.2307/1244092.

Williamson, O.E. (1991) Comparative economic organization: the analysis of discrete structural alternatives, Administrative Science Quarterly, 36(2), pp. 269-296.

Yin, R.K. (2013) Validity and generalization in future case study evaluations, Evaluation, 19(3), pp. 321–332.

APPENDIX A.

Quality Group Actor Interview Guide

PART I. QG Members and Production

A. Who are the members of [QG] ?

B. Can you tell me about the farmers involved in [QG] ?
What is the diversity in the size of the farms in the QG?
What other products are commonly produced by farmers producing [insert product name] ?
[If group has multiple SIQO products:] Do the same farmers participate in producing the different products, or are they distinct groups?

C. Can you describe the rest of the supply chain? Describe the Value Chain (from farm to fork!)
Which supply chain actors are not in the QG?
Are there any cooperatives involved?
Are there any Organisations de Producteurs inside or outside the QG?
What are the functions of each of these other value chain actors?
What are the day-to-day relationships among operators, both formal and informal?

Part II. QG Legal Structure

D. How are decisions made? My interest is especially the legal domain.
Composition of the General Assembly? Are delegates used? Engagement (%)?
What decisions are made by the GA? Voting process?
Composition of the Conseil d'Administration? Election process?
What decisions are made by the Conseil? Voting process?
Do you have a 'règlement intérieur'?
Confirm legal entity used.
[If there are one or more cooperatives:] Are there any farmer members that are outside/not part of the cooperative(s)?
Does your QG adhere closely to the statutes? Are there any differences between what is written in the statutes and what is practised?

E. Have there been any changes over time in the structure/configuration of [QG]?
Which? How have these affected [QG]?
Why did these changes take place?
What is your experience with reporting/dealing with the INAO on the changes?

F. What is the weight or place of farmers within the decision-making structure?
How strong is their position within the overall group, in terms of decision-making rights?
Level of farmer engagement/ participation by farmers?

G. What are the rules and procedures for bringing in new operators (farmers, other VC actors)?

H. Are there any associate members in your QG? If so, please list/describe these members.
Which decisions do they participate in?
Which decisions are they not allowed to participate in?

I. During the process of creation of a QG, the INAO must evaluate the following elements: représentativité

des opérateurs, fonctionnement démocratique, et caractère équilibré de la représentation des différentes catégories d'opérateurs. In your situation, how does your QG meet these criteria?
How could it better meet these criteria?
In other words, what is the fairness of the composition and voting structure:
within the QG, and
within the larger value chain?

J. Do any actors/operators within the value chain set a base price for farmers? If so, what is the process for this?
For example, does the cooperative set a price or margin regularly?
What methods are used by operators to regulate quantity within the value chain?

PART III. QG Operations

K. What does your QG do? What does its management involve? In other words, how does [QG] work with these operators to coordinate production?
What are the critical points in the production process for [insert name of product]?
What types of unexpected issues come up, and how do you deal with them?

L. Are there any particular pieces of equipment/ other [specific] assets [or labour types] that are important for the production process for [insert name of product]? If so, please describe.
How is their use secured within the value chain (e.g. purchase by the cooperative, lease out)?
Is there cross ownership of these assets by different operators?
Are there any issues with labour at one or more points in the production process (harvesting, processing, packaging, etc.) that affect [QG]?

M. What property is owned or leased by the QG, if any?

N. Control. How does [QG] ensure compliance with the specifications?
Is technical assistance one of the missions for helping farmers to adapt to the CDC? If so, what types of outreach and assistance are given?
What does a 'batch' consist of for testing purposes?

O. How are costs of certification covered (the ongoing payments to the Organisme de Contrôle) ?
Do the fees cover the costs?
Do farmers pay by volume?

P. What type of marketing is done by the QG, if any?
Modes of advertising?
Budget? How is it financed?

Q. What do you do to protect your sign/product?
Litigation frequency? Approximate costs?
Perspective on INAO effectiveness in this area?

PART IV. QG History, Development Process, and Institutional Support

R. How did the [QG] get started?
What (type of) operators were behind the beginning of the effort?
How did you get involved in working with [QG]?

S. Can you describe the process of development, of construction of the QG?

Specifications
Delineation of the geographic area [if applicable]
Did an outside expert help, using site visits for example?

T. What institutional support was there during the development process? [If not answered above]
INAO support
Other governmental or non-governmental consultants? For what specific points?
Researchers, and if so, from what disciplines? For what specific points?

U. How has the production of [name of product] evolved over time?
Growth or decline in number of farmers participating, and reasons?
Growth or decline in sales volume/revenue, and reasons?
Growth or decline in number of other operators participating, and reasons?
Market evolution (national/international)?

PART V. External Influences

V. Do government subsidies or other support (besides INAO services) encourage/incentivise farmers or other operators to use this or other SIQO labels?
Why are farmers joining in to produce [name of product]? [If applicable]
Are there any other policies or laws that affect SIQO adoption (e.g. rural property laws, the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP))?

W. What is the level of competition in the marketplace with [insert name of product]?
Competition with conventional?
Competition with other quality labels?
What level of price premium is there?

APPENDIX B.

Farmer Interview Guide

PART I. Production and Value Chain Operation

1. How long have you been doing this, producing [product]?

2. Please describe the different steps involved in your production of [product].
Genetics
Production
Harvest

3. Please describe what happens to your product after it leaves your farm.
What are the next steps in the value chain?
Who buys, processes, sells, delivers, et cetera?

4. Are there any improvements that could be made in the production process/value chain steps? If so please describe?

PART II. Implications of Working with the QG

5. What are the implications for you and your business of working with [QG/product]?
What changes did you have to make to work with the specifications?
You joined in [year stated above]; why did you not join before that?

6. What are the advantages for you and your farm of working with [QG/SIQO]?
What are the financial benefits, price premiums, markets, other?
What are the advantages for your farming style, way of life?
What other benefits do you find?

7. What are the constraints and disadvantages of working with [QG/SIQO]?
What are the financial costs?
Equipment/materials/supplies
Control
Fees
Paid labour
What extra time is involved?
Meetings (how far are they, time spent), communication with ODG, working with others
Your labour: what do you do that takes extra time?
Time spent on control aspects?
Are there any other implications/constraints/disadvantages?

8. What differences in specifications would you like to have, if you could have your wish?
How would you produce differently, if you could receive the same price for your product?

9. Generally, what types of challenges do you encounter when working with other farmers and businesses on a quality label?

10. What government subsidies are available for farmers who want to work with [QG] or other SIQOs?

PART III. ODG Decision making and Value Chain Arrangement

11. Much of my research focus is on how decisions are made within QGs. Please describe the process of [example decision].
How did voting work/ who made the decisions?
Was the outcome equitable?
Do you have any other thoughts on how decisions are made, or examples?

12. Are there any power struggles between operators or businesses within the QG? Please describe.
What is the underlying reason for the struggle(s)?
How could this/these conflicts be remediated?

13. Do you think the arrangement between operators in the QG is equitable/balanced?
Is it equitable to the farmers? Why yes or no?
Is it equitable to non-farm operators? Why yes or no?
Have the benefits eroded to downstream actors over time?

14. What improvements could be made in the arrangement between operators/structure of the QG?
What could have made the distribution of value more equitable?