

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF LAW MANAGEMENT & HUMANITIES

[ISSN 2581-5369]

Volume 8 | Issue 1

2025

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Economic Viability of Geographical Indication Tagged Products in India: Perception and Market Trends

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ABSTRACT

India is a proud country that offers a wide variety of distinctive items that are a reflection of its rich cultural and traditional past. The Government of India has demonstrated its unshakable commitment to conserving and promoting India's rich artistic legacy in recent years by persistently working to get Geographical Indication (GI) tags for unique items that originate from every part of the nation. The desire for genuine, specific-to-location products is growing globally. India is taking a deliberate initiative to realize this perspective and establish itself as a leading supplier of exceptional, one-of-a-kind items by searching for GI tags for its goods. The economic viability of these products depends on various factors, including consumer perception and prevailing market trends. This paper examines the perception of GI-tagged products in India and evaluates their market performance. Consumers often associate GI products with superior quality, authenticity, and cultural value. However, awareness of GI tags among the general public remains limited, except for a few well-known products. The economic impact of GI tagging is multifaceted. Producers of GI products benefit from premium pricing, protection against counterfeiting, and enhanced market opportunities. For example, products like Pochampally Ikat and Kullu Shawls have seen increased demand and improved livelihoods for local artisans. The paper highlights the need for comprehensive policy measures to address challenges related to enforcement, marketing, and consumer education. Strategies such as strengthening legal protections, subsidizing marketing efforts, and fostering collaborations between stakeholders are recommended. Expanding the reach of GI products through digital platforms and international exhibitions can further enhance their market visibility and economic viability. GI-tagged products hold significant promise for India's economic and cultural landscape. Further, the paper addresses existing challenges and leveraging government initiatives, these products can contribute to sustainable development, rural empowerment, and global recognition of India's heritage. The research underscores the need for stronger marketing strategies, policy interventions, and support for rural producers to enhance the economic viability of GI-tagged products. This analysis provides

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valuable insights into how GI protection can contribute to sustainable development and rural economic growth in India.

Keywords: *Geographical Indication, consumer perception, economic viability, counterfeiting.*

I. INTRODUCTION

India's participation in international trade highlights a vibrant array of goods rooted in cultural heritage and geographical uniqueness. From intricately crafted textiles to fragrant spices, the country presents a rich assortment of products celebrated worldwide. In the modern competitive marketplace, preserving authenticity and origin is paramount. Geographical Indications (GI) tags have become vital instruments in protecting India's traditional products. These tags offer recognition and safeguard the authenticity of goods by certifying their connection to a specific place of origin. The premise behind Geographical Indication (GI) protection is that some products get their unique qualities from the particular region in which they have been made. The purpose of this protection is to ensure that only items made in a certain location are allowed to use the GI tag and to discourage illegal usage of these geographical identifiers. The GI registration procedure has given Indian manufacturers more leverage by giving them a legal defence against copying and exploitation of their distinctive goods. As a result, it is anticipated that GI-tagged items will become more economically viable due to improved market positioning and customer confidence. Thus, GI tags foster the rich legacy of India's cultural sectors and act as beacons of authenticity in worldwide commerce.

“Geographical indication is a sign used on products that have a specific geographical origin and possess qualities or a reputation that are due to that origin. To function as a GI, a sign must identify a product as originating in a given place. In addition, the product's qualities, characteristics, or reputation should be essentially due to the place of origin. Since the qualities depend on the geographical place of production, there is a clear link between the product and its original place of production,” according to the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), geographical indications are an essential aspect of Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs). Their significance is acknowledged in Articles 1(2) and 10 of the Paris Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property, as well as in Articles 22 to 24 of the Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) Agreement.²

The definition of GI as adopted by India is as follows, ‘Geographical Indication’, concerning

² EMPLOYMENT NEWS WEEKLY, <https://www.employmentnews.gov.in/newemp/MoreContentNew.aspx?n=Editorial&k=80381>(last visited Oct. 22, 2024).

goods, means “an indication which identifies such goods as agricultural goods, natural goods or manufactured goods as originating, or manufactured in the territory of a country, or a region or locality in that territory, where a given quality, reputation or other characteristics of such goods is essentially attributable to its geographical origin and in the case where such goods are manufactured goods one of the activities of either the production or of processing or preparation of the goods concerned takes place in such territory, region or locality, as the case may be.”³ When it comes to Indian communities, GIs are essential for promoting economic development at the local level as well as protecting native goods. In the Indian setting, this paper examines the many economic advantages of geographical indications, illuminating how these intellectual property instruments support local communities’ success.

The way that consumers perceive GI products is a crucial factor in determining their commercial success. Consumers’ decisions to buy can be influenced by their frequent associations of GI tags with tradition, quality, and authenticity. For example, Darjeeling Tea is prized for its origin in addition to its unique flavour, which helps to support its higher price point in the market. Similar to this, Kanjeevaram Silk is highly regarded due to its elaborate patterns and age-old weaving methods—qualities that are intrinsically connected to its GI status. Additional information on the financial success of GI-tagged items may be found in market trends. It is possible to determine how well these items perform in a market that is competitive by analyzing sales statistics, pricing patterns, and market demand. For instance, because of their perceived worth and originality, items bearing GI tags frequently fetch higher prices, which can boost producer profitability. Nevertheless, there are differences in the economic value depending on the product’s market share, manufacturing volume, and level of brand awareness.

Some GI goods fail to be financially sustainable, while others have prospered in both home and foreign markets. This difference in achievement raises a number of queries: What factors influence GI-tagged items’ commercial success? What are the new market developments that affect their demand, and how do Indian customers see them? By investigating the economic feasibility of GI-tagged goods in India, with an emphasis on market trends, perceptions, and the larger economic environment that influences their course, this paper aims to provide answers to these issues.

(A) Methodology

The research paper employs a secondary data analysis methodology, utilizing existing data from government reports, market studies, academic publications, and industry databases on

³ The Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999, § 2(1)(e).

Geographical Indication (GI)-tagged products in India. Key sources include data from World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) reports and market analysis from industry reports. This method allows for a comprehensive examination of consumer perception, market trends, and the economic impact of GI products. Data will be analyzed using comparative and trend analysis to understand market viability and financial outcomes.

II. ANALYSIS

Geographical Indications (GIs) are indicators indicating a product comes from a certain region and that the natural and human forces there are responsible for its distinctive characteristics. The Geographical Indications for Goods (Registration and Protection) Act of 1999 governs the granting of geographical indications. All organizations or manufacturers of commodities are required to submit a request for geographical indicators. A geographical map of the region or country where the commodities are produced, together with the type of goods to which the application pertains, must be included with the application. The application needs to be submitted in the format specified by the Act. Teams of authorities will evaluate and process the application. The geographical indicator must be registered to assert rights to it. A product bearing a GI tag keeps items from being used without authorization and boosts the manufacturers' earnings from exporting the goods. When exports rise, so does the price of a product with GI labelling on the global market. The right to file a lawsuit for infringement is granted by registration, according to Section 21 of the Geographical Indications Act. Ten years of protection are provided under the Indian GI Act, after which the GI may be renewed.⁴

For example, India possesses a wealth of historic traditional expertise in a variety of industries, including handicrafts and handloom manufacturing. Folklore preservation promotes cultural variety, boosts the economy, and aids in the preservation of cultural heritage. Authenticity and origin are crucial in today's cutthroat marketplace. Geographical Indications (GI) tags have become essential instruments for preserving traditional Indian goods. By guaranteeing that products are appropriately tagged with their place of origin, these tags offer safeguard and recognition. GI tags increase a product's marketability and shield it from unapproved use or copying by emphasizing its distinctive features and connections to particular geographical areas. In the global market, Geographical Indication (GI) tags act as markers of genuineness, highlighting and promoting the rich legacy of India's traditional industries. As of October 2024, there are 643 registered geographical indications in India. Products with GI tags frequently act

⁴ Yashna Walia & Shreya Kumar, *The Success and Failure of GI Tag in India: A Critical Analysis of the Working of Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999*, 1 (01) E-JAIRIPA 232, 234(2020), <https://cnlu.ac.in/storage/2022/08/15-Yashna-Walia-and-Shreya-Kumar.pdf>.

as economic boosters for the areas in which they are produced, generating employment, and cash for regional producers, and promoting artisan tourism. GIs may be a useful marketing tool for Indian manufacturers, increasing exports and income creation as customer knowledge and appreciation for genuine, region-specific products expand. Textiles and other items are in high demand among the general population at the moment.

(A) Economic Significance of GI Tagged Product

The success of GI-tagged items in the marketplace is greatly influenced by how they are perceived. For GI items to continue to be profitable, there must be a significant customer desire for genuine, regional products. Consumer awareness is one of the main issues facing GI goods in India. Despite being a symbol of legitimacy, not all customers understand the meaning of the GI tag. According to a survey, a large number of customers still cannot distinguish between GI and non-GI items, which lessens the potential commercial effect of GI tags. But perception is gradually growing, especially among wealthy and urban consumers who are prepared to shell out more money for genuine, locally produced goods. For example, Darjeeling Tea has become synonymous with premium quality tea globally, and its GI status has helped reinforce its identity both within India and abroad. In India, the market for goods with GI tags is changing dramatically. The market for these products is being shaped by the expanding middle class in India, the effect of online markets, and the rising recognition of traditional products.

Because of their rarity and superior quality, GI-tagged items sometimes fetch a higher price. For example, because of its unique flavour character, Nagaland's GI-tagged Naga Mircha (King Chili) costs more than non-GI chili variants. Similarly, due to their historical significance and fine craftsmanship, Banarasi sarees are far more expensive than other mass-produced sarees. In 2004–05, Darjeeling Tea earned the distinction of being the first product in India to be awarded a Geographical Indication (GI) tag. As of right now, several products in India have been given the same protection, including Basmati rice, Mysore Mallige, Channapatna toys, Mysore silk, Mysore Pak, Coorg orange, Nagpur orange, and Darjeeling tea. It is noteworthy that Darjeeling tea's domestic price has increased fivefold since its award is proof of the economic benefit of GI protection. Additionally, the cost of Thanjavur paintings and basmati rice has increased. Crucially, there are now more occupations based on them. For example, the number of farmers growing Nagpur "oranges" has doubled over the past five years.⁵

Producers are encouraged to apply for GI status for more items to take advantage of market

⁵ Ms. Shruti Verma, *The Economic Impact of Geographical Indication in Indian Communities*, AISHWARYA SANDEEP PARENTING & LAW (Oct. 21, 2024, 11:00 PM), <https://aishwaryasandeep.in/the-economic-impact-of-geographical-indication-in-indian-communities/>.

demand and boost their income since they understand the financial advantages of supplying GI-certified goods. After obtaining the GI tag, the product's worth rises and it becomes more well-known in the international market. In 2020, for example, Kashmir Saffron was registered. The GI designation increased Kashmir Saffron's value in markets and prominence. Before receiving GI, the product cost Rs. 180 per gram; now, it is currently priced at Rs. 227 per gram. The total production of the good has increased from 16.54 metric tons per hectare in 2020–21 to 22.45 metric tons per hectare in 2023–24. The GI tag has significantly enhanced the visibility of Kashmir Saffron in both domestic and international markets. GI items are now more widely available thanks in large part to e-commerce sites like Amazon and Flipkart as well as specialized handicraft websites like Craftsvilla. By overcoming conventional distribution hurdles, the emergence of Internet marketing has made it possible for small-scale manufacturers and craftspeople to reach customers worldwide. An extra degree of market access is offered by government-supported e-commerce sites like Tribes India, which advertise domestic GI-tagged goods. ⁶Numerous variables influence the economic sustainability of items with the Geographical Indication (GI) label, such as their capacity to fetch high prices, market accessibility, and the contribution they make to the livelihoods of producers, especially in rural India. In-depth comparisons of GI and non-GI products, their effects on companies' bottom lines, and the function of market access and governmental regulations are covered in this part. In several important economic areas, GI products frequently perform better than non-GI items, particularly in terms of premium pricing and market distinction. According to research conducted by the Centre for WTO Studies in India, GI goods may sell for 20–30% more than their non-GI equivalents. This is because GI products emphasize their unique characteristics, which are directly linked to their geographical origin and traditional know-how.

For instance:

- Due to its unique flavour, fragrance, and long-grain quality—all of which are intrinsically linked to the geographical areas of India and Pakistan—Basmati rice, a product with a GI designation, is marketed for significantly more than other types of rice.
- Considering they represent luxury and heritage, Banarasi Sarees are another category where GI labelling has raised market demand. The protection that guarantees only sarees made in particular regions of Varanasi may use the label benefits the artisans who make

⁶IPWAVE, <https://www.readipwave.com/geographical-indications-a-changing-paradigm-towards-economic-growth/> (last visited Oct. 21, 2024).

these sarees.

This pattern may not apply to all items, though. The restricted market reach and seasonal production of certain GI goods, like Hyderabad Haleem, limit their economic viability. In the same vein, less established items—like Chhattisgarh's Bastar Iron Craft—find it difficult to establish themselves in bigger markets, which lowers their profitability in comparison to more well-known GI products.

(B) Role of GI in Enhancing Producer Incomes:

One of the key objectives of the GI system is to support rural communities by providing them with a mechanism to protect their traditional products from exploitation. In theory, this leads to increased incomes for producers, artisans, and farmers.

For instance, since its GI certification, Telangana's Pochampally Ikat has experienced a notable increase in demand, improving the incomes of its weavers. In a similar vein, the GI tag has assisted Himachal Pradesh's Kullu Shawl weavers by reducing the number of fake shawls on the market. These financial advantages are especially noticeable in industries like handicrafts and textiles, where customer demand is greatly influenced by the distinctiveness and cultural value of items. According to the 2019–2020 Handloom Census of India, the GI status of handloom goods has helped to boost job prospects in rural areas. The GI system enhances local communities' financial stability while preserving traditional handicrafts by giving craftsmen protection and respect.⁷

a. Government Support and Incentives for GI-Tagged Products

To encourage the sale of goods with GI tags, the Indian government has launched several programs and incentives. These programs are intended to give manufacturers capacity building, marketing help, and financial aid. Among the important programs are:

National Handloom Development Programme (NHDP): From 2021–2022 to 2025–2026, the National Handloom Development Programme (NHDP) Scholarship Component seeks to support India's handloom industry and enhance the lives of handloom weavers. With yearly financial aid of up to ₹2,00,000, it specifically targets the children of these weavers. The main goal of the program is to improve the socioeconomic standing of weavers' families and contribute to India's cultural legacy by empowering them through education and guaranteeing the handloom industry's sustained growth. By promoting GI-tagged goods and offering support

⁷ Yashna Walia & Shreya Kumar, *The Success and Failure of GI Tag in India: A Critical Analysis of the Working of Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999*, 1 (01) E-JAIRIPA 232, 234 (2020), <https://cnlu.ac.in/storage/2022/08/15-Yashna-Walia-and-Shreya-Kumar.pdf>.

for design, infrastructure, and marketing, this initiative seeks to grow the handloom industry.⁸

One District One Product (ODOP) Initiative: India's One District One Product (ODOP) initiative aims to highlight and support the unique and traditional products of each district across the country. The program is intended to assist regional producers, business owners, and artists in creating and promoting their goods. Additionally, the ODOP works in tandem to find items that are eligible for a GI tag and reach out to states that have not yet been penetrated. By positioning these goods as distinctive and superior, the ODOP program has contributed to a rise in both local and international demand for them. The program has significantly contributed to resolving export challenges by establishing export value chains, reducing logistics costs, and enabling Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) to export collectively as clusters or groups. This aligns seamlessly with the objectives of Atmanirbhar Bharat.⁹

These government initiatives have played a significant role in raising awareness of GI-tagged goods, particularly in terms of broadening their consumer base and giving manufacturers the resources they need to scale up production.

GI goods have a bright future in the worldwide market. In foreign markets, Indian GI products are frequently regarded as luxury, specialty goods that fetch high prices. For instance, one of the most well-known GI-tagged goods, basmati rice, is a vital export good for India and a substantial source of foreign exchange profits. However, small manufacturers may find it difficult to meet the strict quality control, branding, and international trade requirements needed to access the export market. According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Progress (OECD) research, market access and differentiation are the two primary determinants of economic progress.

Initiatives like Digital India have been implemented to empower local artisans and provide them access to international marketing channels. To safeguard traditional crafts and provide financial support to craftsmen, it is essential to implement broader initiatives such as awareness campaigns, educational programs, and targeted incentives. Small-scale artisans, in particular, would benefit from measures like export subsidies, raw material assistance, and access to legal support.

b. Need for Geographical Indications-

When deciding whether or not geographical indications are worth maintaining, many

⁸ MYSCHEME, <https://www.myscheme.gov.in/schemes/nhdpsc> (last visited Oct. 22, 2024).

⁹ EMPLOYMENT NEWS, <https://www.employmentnews.gov.in/newemp/MoreContentNew.aspx?n=Editorial&k=80381> (last visited Oct. 22, 2024).

individuals and organizations throughout the world are frequently perplexed, below are some advantages of doing so:

- Encourages Economic Growth: Producers' general financial well-being is a direct result of GI protection. Furthermore, GI product marketing and promotion in the area stimulates secondary economic activity, which supports regional economic growth.
- Stop Unauthorized Use of GI Tags: The service's authorized owner is legally entitled to stop any person who is not from the GI area from using their GI tags. To prevent harm to their reputations, owners may also file a lawsuit against illegal users.
- Authenticity and Quality Control: The GI tag serves as a stamp of authenticity, guaranteeing that the goods bearing this designation originate in the designated area. For instance, the "King of Mangoes," Alphonso mangoes, are highly valued for their unmatched flavor and fragrance. Customers are shielded against fakes by the GI designation, which guarantees that the Alphonso mangoes they eat are real, high-quality fruits cultivated in regions of Maharashtra renowned for their excellent climate, soil composition, and traditional farming methods.
- Legacy and Conventional Information: GI tags recognize and preserve objects created throughout periods of traditional knowledge and social customs. Products with roots in decades of traditional knowledge and cultural customs are recognized and protected by GI tags. Maharashtra's Alphonso mangoes and Sapota GIs honour the fruits' historical significance as well as their part in regional farming and cooking customs. It places an emphasis on knowledge, farming methods, and intergenerational wisdom that have been handed down through the years and aid in the preservation of cultural legacy.
- Unique Territories and Features: The GI tags highlight how the land area affects various areas and features of the product's territory. The unique combination of temperature, soil, and topography in the area is responsible for the remarkable flavour, fragrance, and texture of Alphonso mangoes. Similar to this, the specific climatic conditions that exist in the area give Maharashtra's sapota its unique flavour, texture, and sweetness.¹⁰

Geographical indications play a vital role in uplifting rural communities as India progresses in economic development and cultural preservation. With government initiatives such as Make in India, Skill India, One District One Product, Self-Reliant India, and Vocal for Local gaining momentum, the next decade holds significant promise for geographical indications in the

¹⁰ IAS EXPRESS, <https://www.iasexpress.net/geographical-indications-gi-tags-in-india/> (last visited Oct. 23, 2024).

country. By ensuring fair prices for their products and celebrating the unique heritage of their regional origins, GI protection and promotion empower local producers, including small-scale farmers and artisans. This paves the way for inclusive growth and global recognition, positioning India to achieve remarkable milestones. Geographical indications thus stand as guardians of India's cultural heritage, intertwining narratives of tradition, artistry, and identity with the march toward economic prosperity.

III. CASE STUDIES

(A) Pochampally Ikat Saree: From Decline to Growth!

The census town of Bhoodan Pochampally is located in the Telangana state of India's Yadadri Bhuvanagiri district. It is situated in the Bhongir division's Pochampalle Mandal. This hamlet is well-known for its handwoven Ikkat sarees and other woven goods. The area is home to hundreds of looms that make a lot of sarees. Pochampally is the location where threads and colours combine in the hands of talented weavers to create stunning saris and other apparel items that are subsequently sold in the marketplace. Ikat is currently one of the most well-known and sought-after weavings in the nation due to Pochampally weaving's enormous popularity growth.

More than 10,000 weaving families call this silk hamlet home, which has centuries-old looms, patterns, and methods. Before weaving, lengths of thread are linked in an elaborate pattern of predefined colours using an 18-step process known as ikat weaving. Since a machine can never replicate the hand's craftsmanship, all Pochampally looms are hand-loomed. In the Ikat dyeing style, the weavers are well known for their geometric and traditional designs. Pochampally saris are woven in the districts of Nalgonda and Warangal in the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh using a special, ancient fabric that can be either silk, cotton, or a mix.¹¹

Before weaving, the yarn is tied and dyed to create the cloth. In Pochampally, the industry sustains over 1,000 weaving households and approximately 5,000 weavers, who operate around 2,000 traditional pit looms. But the craft of making goods from Pochampally Ikkat saw a sharp downturn in the 1990s. The decline of the industry was due to both careless market efforts and the low efficiency of traditional pit looms. Even though it took more than forty-five days to create a warp of eight saris with this cloth, the weavers received pitifully inadequate salaries. On December 31, 2004, Pochampally Ikkat was awarded the first-ever Geographical Indication (GI) recognition for a handloom product in India, following its GI registration facilitated by the

¹¹ RURAL TOURISM GOVERNMENT OF INDIA, <https://rural.tourism.gov.in/Pochampally.html> (last visited Oct. 23, 2024).

Pochampally Handloom Tie & Dye Manufacturers Association. After the registration, the cloth gained significant attention, leading to a high demand for it. In 2008, the demand for Pochampally saris rose by 15–20%, which resulted in a 20% rise in weaver pay.¹²

a. Impact of GI Recognition-

- **Economic Benefits to Weavers:** Pochampally sarees' market worth increased as a result of its GI designation, which raised the demand for them both locally and abroad. By distinguishing their genuine goods from knockoffs, it allowed local weavers to demand higher prices, which increased their earnings.
- **Cultural Preservation:** Because it emphasized the sarees' distinctive artistry and cultural value, the GI designation was essential to the preservation of the traditional Ikat weaving process. This ensured the ongoing existence of this age-old trade by encouraging weavers to go on with their long-standing customs.
- **Branding and Market Positioning:** Pochampally sarees acquired a unique market character as a result of GI identification, which made it possible to promote them as premium, genuine goods. This differentiation improved the product's placement and raised its profile in both domestic and foreign markets.

An important step in preserving India's rich textile legacy and bolstering the livelihoods of rural craftsmen was the GI recognition of Pochampally sarees. Persistent attempts are required to prevent counterfeit items and improve market access, even if the GI designation helped distinguish genuine Pochampally products and contributed to their economic sustainability. All things considered, the GI tag has contributed to the preservation of Pochampally Ikat's cultural heritage and established it as a crucial component of India's handloom identity internationally.

(B) Alphonso Mango: A Long Struggle for GI Tag!

Alphonso mango or hapus, often referred to as the "King of Mangoes," is known for its rich flavour, smooth texture, and unique aroma. Cultivated primarily in the Ratnagiri, Sindhudurg, Palghar, and Raigad districts of Maharashtra, Alphonso has been a symbol of India's agricultural heritage for centuries. The Alphonso mango, also known as Hapus, is renowned as one of the finest varieties of mangoes and is grown along the 200 kilometers of Konkan coastline, particularly in Devgad and Ratnagiri. The soil and environment in which Hapus is grown affect its flavour. Across the nation, several attempts have been made to cultivate Alphonso mangoes. Hapus' unique flavor, aroma, and color are attributed to the geography and the coastal volcanic

¹²ASIAIP, <https://asiaiplaw.com/article/the-economic-impact-of-geographical-indications-in-india> (last visited Oct. 23, 2024).

soil found in Ratnagiri and Devgad. What makes Devgad and Ratnagiri Hapus unique is the fruit's thin skin. The best Hapus are produced in the districts of Devgad and Ratnagiri. These areas produce hapus, which is sold to other nations. The fruit's flesh is substantial and its skin is thin.¹³

The legitimacy and sale price of the original fruit were impacted by the presence of counterfeit goods in the market prior to the GI tag, which was one of the difficulties Alphonso mangoes faced. Alphonso-growing regions' producers frequently found it difficult to compete with lower-quality, less expensive varieties that were mislabelled as Alphonso. As a result, legitimate producers saw a decline in sales, and customers were uncertain about the product's legitimacy. Realizing the importance of preserving Alphonso's integrity, regional farmer organizations and business associations started pushing for a GI tag to preserve the mango's image and guarantee that only fruit cultivated in the approved areas may be marketed as "Alphonso." The esteemed fruit was granted the coveted Geographical Indication (GI) designation in 2018, thereby acknowledging its association with the particular geographic area of Maharashtra.¹⁴ Products that have a specific geographical origin and possess qualities or a reputation linked to that origin are recognized with a Geographical Indication (GI). Because it originated in that specific geographic location, such a name effectively gives an assurance of quality and originality. The only Alphonso mangoes that may be called that are grown in the districts of Ratnagiri and Sindhudurg in Maharashtra.

The Alphonso mango has an unmatched reputation and a moniker that carries a guarantee of excellence. Often referred to as hapus in Maharashtra, Alphonso's labelling will undoubtedly preserve its uniqueness and exclusivity among customers in the worldwide market. Because of the product's geotagging, the fruit will continue to meet quality criteria in the global market. Furthermore, it will tackle the crucial necessity of traceability in food chains. Traceability demonstrates the entire process of how the fruit was grown and supplied in a sustainable manner. Additionally, GI tagging the Alphonso mango will guarantee that the remote tribal tribes that toil diligently to grow it would receive the steady income they are due.¹⁵

a. Impact of GI Recognition-

- Ensuring Authenticity: By helping to distinguish authentic Alphonso mangoes from

¹³ALPHONSO MANGO. IN, https://alphonsomango.in/blogs/buy/alphonso-mango-gi-tag?srsId=AfmBOopkzmSoUcncvSg_XM0k-eFw2kgHJ5SmLu9ter6zuTy09OnC9a_NQ (last visited Oct. 23, 2024).

¹⁴ GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATIONS REGISTRY, <https://search.ipindia.gov.in/GIRPublic/Application/Details/497> (last visited Oct. 23, 2024).

¹⁵ DOWNTOEARTH, <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/agriculture/the-alphonso-mango-is-now-completely-traceable-76863> (last visited Oct. 23, 2024).

fakes in both home and foreign markets, the GI tag increased customer confidence.

- **Economic Upliftment**: Farmers thought that by increasing the value of their brand, they would be able to sell their produce for more money, which would benefit the agricultural community.
- **Market Recognition**: Additionally, the labelling gave Alphonso mangoes a distinctive character that improved their ability to compete in international markets, especially those in Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and Europe.

An important step in acknowledging the fruit's distinctive heritage and ties to Maharashtra's Konkan area was the 2018 GI badge for Alphonso mangoes. Even if the product's brand value has increased and increased market recognition has been guaranteed by its GI designation, problems with enforcement and customer awareness still need to be addressed. Local farmers will profit from the GI tag's further enhancement of Alphonso mangoes' economic viability, which will also help to preserve this famous Indian fruit for coming generations.

IV. RECOMMENDATION/ WAY FORWARD

- To increase the number, the government could offer incentives to GIs at the beginning—at the producer level. Additionally, the focus should be on changing the legislation to guarantee direct benefits to producers and bar "non-producers" from profiting from GIs. To guarantee that GI producers, manufacturers, and labourers can stay up to date with contemporary trends and customer expectations, it is also critical to leverage technology and concentrate on skill development and digital literacy.
- Developing market outlet strategies might help alleviate some of the marketing and branding challenges associated with promoting GI-based goods. This can be combined with the current plans to create exclusive rural marketplaces. Such platforms would serve as tourist destinations as well as convenient places for guests to buy GI goods.
- The number of startups has increased recently, which is in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Establishing a connection between GIs and these businesses, as well as tying their achievements to the SDGs, will guarantee that they support social development and draw attention to GI goods. Governmental organizations, trade groups, and producer associations must work together to arrange further shows aimed at popularizing GI-based goods through diverse media platforms.
- India could stimulate growth in the overseas market by promoting GI-based goods through its embassies. The government needs to work to guarantee that our products are

favourably treated under the international tariff scheme for GI goods. Accelerating GI protection can also improve the “vocal for local” campaign.¹⁶

V. CONCLUSION

India provides a special place where intellectual property protection and economic growth meet, thanks to its geographical indications. In addition to being a symbol of India’s rich cultural legacy, GI-tagged goods provide substantial chances to improve rural people’s standard of living, protect traditional knowledge, and advance sustainable development. GI tags are crucial to India’s export industry since they serve as soft power agents, economic growth platforms, and stewards of cultural heritage. GI-tagged items augment India’s worldwide reach and impact by safeguarding authenticity, impeding imitation, improving market accessibility, endorsing rural livelihoods, cultivating cultural diplomacy, and incentivizing tourism. However, several variables, that include as customer perception, market trends, and the availability of government backing, affect how profitable GI-tagged items may be. While certain GI goods, like Basmati rice and Darjeeling tea, have been successful in both home and foreign markets, many others face difficulties including variable quality control, restricted market access, and counterfeiting. To fully maximize the economic potential of GI- tagged items, government agencies, business groups, and producer communities will need to work together in concert going ahead. This entails fortifying legal safeguards, improving branding and promotional campaigns, and broadening market accessibility via global trade accords.

India’s GI goods have a bright future ahead of them, especially if they can be more effectively incorporated into the international market. The economic feasibility of GI-tagged goods in India is demonstrated in this research. Positive perceptions of GI tags exist among producers and consumers, and market trends are favourable. However, issues like poor awareness and lax enforcement must be dealt with. GI tagging has the potential to greatly strengthen the Indian economy and enrich consumers as well as producers if enabling policies are put in place.

¹⁶ DOWNTOEARTH, <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/governance/untapped-potential-94029> (last visited Oct. 22, 2024).