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ANALYSING STAKEHOLDERS IN GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATIONS: PATTERNS, GAPS, AND RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS – A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW (2014–2024)

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Abstract: Geographical indications (GIs) are frequently framed as collective, place-based arrangements. However, the literature varies in how stakeholders are conceptualised, made visible, and related to one another. This PRISMA-guided review examines how GI studies conceptualise stakeholders, make them visible, and describe relations. Scopus and Web of Science searches (2014–2024) yielded 35 journal articles. Visibility was coded as explicit naming of stakeholder groups in full texts. Results show a post-2018 surge, a European core, and mainly qualitative case-study designs. Producers and public authorities are the most consistently represented groups, whereas the visibility of other stakeholders varies across the literature. Participation, authority, coordination, and inclusion–exclusion are frequently discussed, but conceptualised and examined in different ways. The review offers a comparative synthesis of stakeholder-oriented GI scholarship and identifies implications for stakeholder analysis in territorial GI contexts.

Keywords: geographical indications, stakeholders, systematic literature review, PRISMA, stakeholder visibility, governance, rural development

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Povzetek: Geografske označbe (GO) so pogosto predstavljene kot kolektivne, v prostoru utemeljene entitete. Deležniki so v raziskavah GO obravnavani skozi različne konceptualne in analitične vidike. Pričujoči sistematični pregled literature, izveden po smernicah PRISMA, analizira, kako študije o GO konceptualizirajo deležnike, kako jih prepoznavajo v besedilih ter kako opisujejo njihove medsebojne odnose. Z iskanjem po zbirkah Scopus in Web of Science (2014–2024) smo prepoznali 35 znanstvenih člankov. Rezultati kažejo izrazit porast objav po letu 2018, evropsko jedro obravnavanih primerov in predvsem kvalitativne študije primera. Proizvajalci in javni organi so najdosledneje zastopani skupini, medtem ko so potrošniki in lokalne skupnosti obravnavani bolj parcialno. Participacija, avtoriteta, koordinacija ter dinamike (ne)vključevanja in izključevanja so v literaturi pogosto obravnavane, vendar konceptualizirane in analizirane na različne načine. Pregled nudi primerjalno sintezo tovrstne literature o GO ter opredeljuje smernice za prihodnjo analizo deležnikov v prostorskem kontekstu.

Highlights:

- PRISMA-guided review examines stakeholder-oriented GI research.
- The research is concentrated in European cases and mainly uses qualitative case-study designs.
- Producers and public authorities are the most visible stakeholder groups.

- Participation, authority, coordination, and inclusion–exclusion are discussed.
- The review synthesises implications for stakeholder analysis in rural and territorial GI contexts.

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1. Introduction

Geographical indications (GIs) refer to legally protected product names that link specific goods to a defined place of origin, where particular qualities, reputation, or production characteristics are attributed to that geographical area (Crescenzi et al., 2022). Initially developed as instruments of intellectual property protection (Gangjee, 2017), GIs have increasingly been understood as place-based regulatory arrangements (Ledinek Lozej, 2021) associated with rural development (Barjolle et al., 2009), the safeguarding of traditional knowledge, and the valorisation of locally embedded resources (Rinallo and Pitardi, 2019). In European rural contexts, they are frequently presented as tools connecting quality production with sustainability agendas, territorial identity, and social cohesion (García-Hernández et al., 2022; Valverde et al., 2023; Flinzberger et al., 2024).

This broad range of expectations has contributed to the rapid expansion and interdisciplinary diversification of GI research. Scholars have examined GIs from legal perspectives focused on regulation and intellectual property (Knaak, 2015), economic perspectives concerned with value creation and competitiveness (Huysmans and Swinnen, 2019), and socio-cultural approaches addressing heritage-making and meaning (Bowen, 2010; Ledinek Lozej, 2020). Rural sociology and geography have further highlighted questions of collective organisation, territorial change, and spatial development (Barham, 2003; Rippon, 2013a; Rippon, 2013b). More recently, research has opened the "black box" of GI registration and implementation, demonstrating that these processes are often demanding, contested, and highly context-dependent (Quiñones-Ruiz et al., 2016).

Across these diverse strands of scholarship, GIs are repeatedly described as collective and territorially embedded arrangements rather than merely legal labels or market instruments (Williams, 2007; Barjolle et al., 2009; Bowen, 2010; Parasecoli and Tasaki, 2011; Samardzic et al., 2013; Crescenzi et al., 2022). Existing research has shown that GI systems are shaped by producer organisations, public authorities, territorial actors, communication practices, and wider governance environments. Studies of governance arrangements and producer organisations (Belletti et al., 2017; Quiñones-Ruiz et al., 2016), collective action and value-chain dynamics (Bowen, 2010; Bardají et al., 2009; Fernández-Barcala et al., 2017), terroir construction and local development, as well as communication processes, territorial narratives, and collective value creation (Castelló, 2021; Castelló et al., 2023; Conneely and Mahon, 2015; Edelmann et al., 2020), all point to the importance of interactions among multiple actors.

The relevance of stakeholder-related questions in GI research therefore does not stem from the discovery of stakeholders as a previously neglected topic. Rather, it reflects the fact that

stakeholders are conceptualised and analysed through diverse disciplinary traditions, conceptual vocabularies, and analytical priorities. Stakeholders – understood here as individuals, groups, and organisations whose interests and power shape authority, participation, benefit distribution, and the legitimacy of GI arrangements (Stubbs and Warnaby, 2015) – appear throughout the literature, but in different forms and with different analytical emphases. Consequently, questions concerning inclusion and exclusion, authority over quality definitions and specifications, representation, participation, and the conditions under which collective action is enabled or constrained (Mancini, 2013) are discussed across a wide range of studies, but not always in directly comparable ways.

This diversity raises an important analytical challenge. Studies examining governance arrangements, collective action, territorial development, sustainability, or implementation processes (e.g., Williams, 2007; Barjolle et al., 2009; Marie-Vivien, 2020) identify stakeholder groups with varying degrees of specificity and analytical focus. Some studies examine stakeholders through organisational, governance, or communication perspectives, whereas others refer to them more indirectly within broader discussions of GI implementation and territorial dynamics. As a result, stakeholder visibility – that is, which actors are explicitly recognised and made analytically relevant in research accounts – provides a useful lens for comparing how GI systems are represented across the literature.

The analytical focus is therefore not only on which stakeholders are identified, but also on how relationships among them are represented. GI systems are inherently relational: registration, specification drafting, quality control, marketing, and long-term implementation depend on interaction, coordination, negotiation, and collective action (Mariani et al., 2021; Török et al., 2020). Yet stakeholder groups are often discussed through different analytical lenses and levels of detail, making it difficult to compare how studies address questions of authority, participation, representation, coordination, interdependence, and power. Broader stakeholder environments – including market actors, local communities, intermediary organisations, public authorities beyond GI administration, and supporting institutions – also receive varying levels of attention. This variation is particularly relevant for understanding why some GI initiatives consolidate and generate sustained collective benefits, while others struggle to maintain momentum or remain economically inactive despite formal registration, becoming so-called “sleeping beauties” (Marie-Vivien, 2020).

This review starts from the observation that stakeholder-related questions are addressed unevenly across the literature and often through different conceptual vocabularies, disciplinary traditions, and analytical priorities. The contribution of this review is therefore not to ‘discover’ stakeholders in GI systems, but to synthesise how stakeholder-oriented dimensions are conceptualised, represented, and relationally articulated across the stakeholder-labelled GI literature. Three research questions guide the review:

(RQ1) How does GI research conceptualise and study stakeholders in terms of methods, analytical frameworks, and spatial scales?

(RQ2) Which stakeholder groups does the GI literature identify?

(RQ3) What relational patterns and tensions emerge from how stakeholders are represented in GI research?

By mapping which stakeholder groups are explicitly recognised in GI research – and which remain less visible, backgrounded, or only selectively addressed – this article contributes a comparative synthesis of stakeholder-oriented GI scholarship. Rather than claiming that GI research has neglected stakeholders, the review examines how stakeholder-related dimensions are conceptualised, represented, and relationally articulated across studies that explicitly engage with stakeholder terminology.

After outlining the review design and analytical procedure, the article presents three complementary sets of results. First, it synthesises how stakeholder-oriented GI research has been structured to date, highlighting dominant methodological approaches, theoretical framings, and spatial scales (RQ1). Second, it maps which stakeholder groups are made visible across the reviewed corpus (RQ2). Third, it examines what relational patterns, asymmetries, and tensions emerge from how stakeholders are represented in GI research (RQ3). In doing so, the review provides a clearer analytical foundation for future stakeholder-focused GI research and a structured baseline for those engaged in the design and implementation of GI schemes in territorial contexts.

2. Methodology

2.1 Review approach

This study applies a systematic literature review combined with a textual narrative synthesis, following the framework proposed by Xiao and Watson (2019). This approach is well suited to research fields marked by conceptual diversity, varied empirical designs and multiple theoretical perspectives. It supports structured interpretation across heterogeneous studies, rather than aggregation of directly comparable quantitative results.

The aim of the review is not bibliometric mapping. Instead, it constructs an analytically coherent corpus that enables a focused examination of how research on GIs addresses stakeholders. The analysis concentrates on how stakeholders are conceptualised, identified, and framed within empirical and conceptual work. It further examines the extent to which stakeholder relations are analysed explicitly across different strands of stakeholder-oriented GI research, and how relational dynamics are represented through different analytical approaches.

To ensure transparency and replicability, the review procedure was organised according to PRISMA principles (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses). The PRISMA approach provides a structured and transparent framework for conducting and reporting systematic literature reviews (Rigolon et al., 2018). It organises the review process into four sequential stages: identification of potentially relevant records, screening of records based on titles and abstracts, eligibility assessment through full-text reading, and final inclusion of

studies that meet the defined criteria (Moher et al., 2009). A central principle of PRISMA is that each stage of selection should be explicitly documented, including the number of excluded records and the reasons for exclusion, thereby improving transparency, traceability, and reproducibility. The PRISMA framework requires authors to document the logic of inclusion and exclusion throughout the review process. In this study, PRISMA was used primarily as a procedural and reporting framework to ensure a systematic and clearly documented review workflow, rather than as a tool for quantitative meta-analysis (Razpotnik Visković & Logar, 2022).

2.2 Literature search and selection procedure

The literature search was conducted in *Scopus* and *Web of Science*, covering English-language peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2014 and 2024. This timeframe was selected to focus on contemporary stakeholder-oriented perspectives within GI research, including current conceptualisations, governance debates, and stakeholder-related research agendas. The review was therefore not intended to provide a historical reconstruction of GI scholarship as a whole. Earlier GI scholarship remains important for understanding the longer development of the field, but it lies outside the temporal scope of this review.

These databases were chosen because they provide broad coverage of high-quality international research, apply rigorous indexing standards, and support transparent and replicable search strategies, making them well-suited for interdisciplinary reviews in the social sciences and sustainability research (e.g., Cei et al., 2018; Falasco et al., 2024). To ensure methodological transparency and comparability across studies, the review excluded monographs, policy reports, and other forms of grey literature due to inconsistent review standards and limited replicability.

Subject area filters were applied to maintain conceptual relevance and analytical manageability within a highly interdisciplinary and terminologically heterogeneous field. Given the interdisciplinary nature of GI scholarship, a fully inclusive search across all potentially relevant categories would have substantially broadened the scope of the review and increased the number of only indirectly related records. The category selection therefore involved a trade-off between inclusiveness and conceptual focus. *Scopus* and *Web of Science* use different classification systems, which makes direct equivalence between categories impossible. *Scopus* relies on broad subject areas, whereas *Web of Science* uses more specific and partly overlapping subject categories. In *Scopus*, the search was restricted to the broad subject areas of *Social Sciences* and *Environmental Science*. In *Web of Science*, results were limited to *Sociology*, *Geography*, *Environmental Sciences*, and *Environmental Studies*.

These categories were selected because they were considered most relevant for identifying research on rural development, territorial governance, institutional coordination, socio-environmental regulation, and stakeholder-related dimensions of GI systems. *Sociology* and *Geography* were included because of their engagement with collective organisation, territorial embeddedness, rural development, and actor relations, while *Environmental Sciences* and *Environmental Studies* capture debates on sustainability, resource governance, agri-food

systems, and socio-ecological dimensions increasingly associated with GIs. This strategy is also comparable to previous systematic reviews on geographical indications, which used related social and environmental subject-area filters (e. g., Cardoso et al., 2022). Nevertheless, the selected filters should be understood as a methodological compromise rather than as complete disciplinary coverage of GI scholarship. This represents a limitation of the review, since relevant studies from adjacent fields such as agricultural economics, planning, food studies, management, anthropology, and cultural studies may have been excluded from the final corpus.

Search queries were applied to titles, abstracts, and keywords, using the following string: *geographical indication** AND *stakeholder**. The wildcard (*) was used to capture different word forms and derivatives. The search strategy was intentionally term-dependent. Its objective was to construct a corpus of studies explicitly engaging with both GI and stakeholder terminology that would enable a systematic examination of stakeholder-oriented GI research across different geographical and institutional contexts.

The strategy therefore prioritised the umbrella concept of *geographical indications* rather than the full range of scheme-specific labels, such as *PDO, PGI* or *AOP*, which vary across legal systems and national regulatory traditions. This choice provided a consistent conceptual boundary across diverse GI settings, because all included studies explicitly engaged with the broader category of geographical indications. However, studies focusing on *PDO*, *PGI*, *AOP* or other scheme-specific arrangements may have remained outside the corpus if they did not use *geographical indication* as an umbrella term in their title, abstract or keywords. Expanding the search to include the full range of scheme-specific labels would have opened a much wider and less clearly bounded search field, whereas the objective of this review was to examine stakeholder-oriented scholarship explicitly connected to the broader GI concept.

A similar limitation concerns the term *stakeholder*. This term is associated with particular disciplinary traditions, especially governance research, policy studies, strategic communication, and management-oriented approaches. As a result, relevant scholarship from fields such as anthropology, history, cultural studies, or rural sociology may analyse similar relational dynamics through alternative vocabularies, including actors, institutions, producer groups, communities, participants, or rightholders, without explicitly using stakeholder terminology. The review should therefore be understood as an analysis of stakeholder-labelled GI literature rather than as a comprehensive review of all GI scholarship dealing with collective organisation, governance, or actor relations.

To address this limitation, a supplementary exploratory search was conducted using broader relational terms, including actors, participants and rightholders. The same databases and time period were used, but the term stakeholder was replaced with these broader terms. The purpose was not to add more articles to the final corpus, but to assess which GI studies might be missed by a search based only on stakeholder terminology. The results confirmed that a wider body of GI scholarship examines how producers, institutions, local communities, experts and other actors cooperate, negotiate, organise collectively and shape GI development, but often uses concepts

such as collective action, governance, heritage, territorial organisation or institutional arrangements instead of stakeholder. The supplementary search was therefore used to clarify the boundaries of the corpus. While it confirmed the existence of relevant GI scholarship using alternative vocabularies, it therefore helped distinguish stakeholder-labelled GI research from a broader body of actor-, governance-, and collective-action-oriented scholarship.

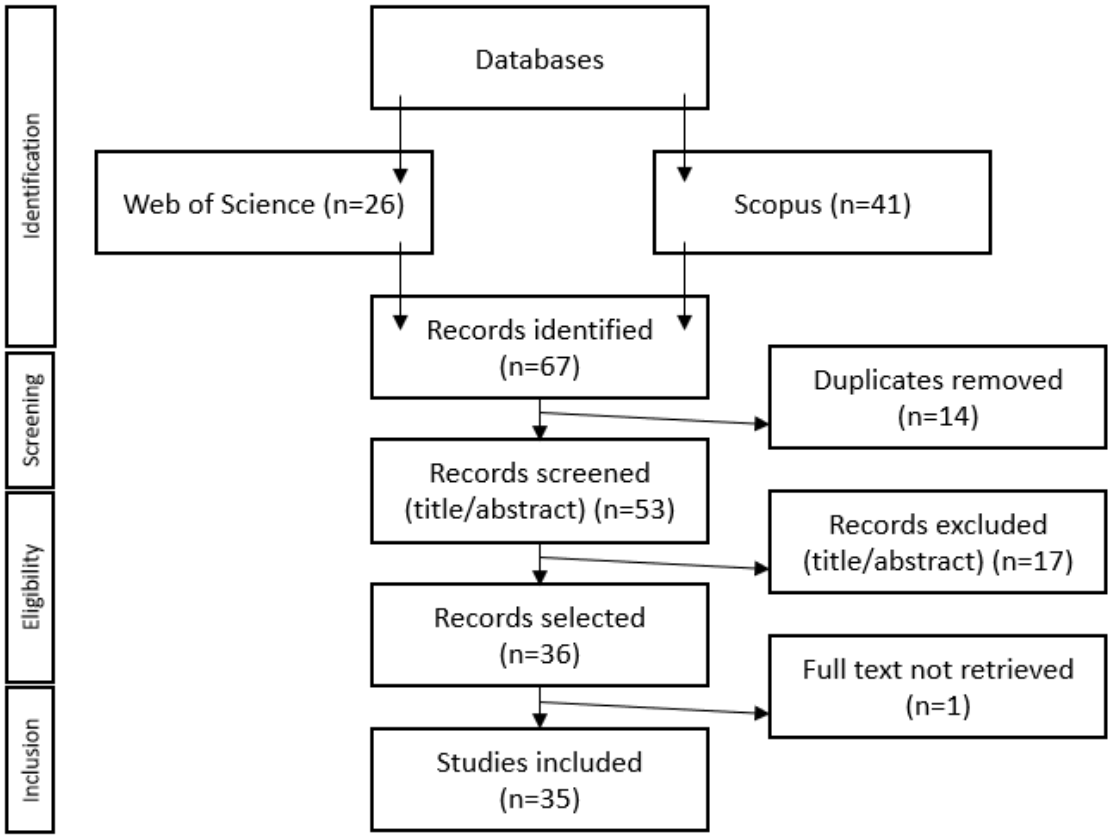


Figure 1. PRISMA flowchart of the search and selection process. Source: author

The search and selection process followed PRISMA guidelines and is illustrated in the flow diagram (Figure 1). Database searches in *Web of Science* and *Scopus* initially identified 26 and 41 records, respectively, for a combined total of 67 records. Following the removal of 14 duplicates, 53 unique records were screened on the basis of titles and abstracts. At this stage, 17 records were excluded, primarily for falling into one of three categories:

1. they dealt with geographical information systems (commonly abbreviated as GIS in the literature) rather than geographical indications (typically abbreviated as GIs)
2. they had no meaningful connection to agri-food GI frameworks;
3. or they mentioned GIs only incidentally or as a peripheral topic.

Examples of excluded material include studies wholly outside the review's scope (such as those investigating the role of geographical information systems in emergency services or the relationship between electricity consumption and CO_2 emissions), research centred on non-

food products or items only distantly related to GIs (for instance, non-timber forest products or guaraná), and publications that invoked GI terminology in a tangential way (e.g., within broader discussions of branding strategies or agricultural greenhouse-gas emissions rather than place-based quality schemes). The 36 records that passed title/abstract screening proceeded to full-text evaluation; one full text could not be obtained. Ultimately, 35 studies fulfilled the eligibility criteria and were included in the review. The studies included in the final corpus are listed in Annex 1, Table 1. The relatively small final corpus should therefore be interpreted in relation to the deliberately focused scope of the review: it reflects the size of the stakeholder-labelled GI literature captured by the defined search strategy, rather than an attempt to represent the full body of GI scholarship.

2.3 Data extraction and coding procedure

Data were extracted using a structured extraction matrix. For each article, the matrix captured key study attributes, including publication year, journal, study location, spatial scale (municipal, inter-municipal, regional, national), research design (e.g., literature review, single-case study, comparative study), methodological approach, and the stakeholder groups explicitly mentioned in the text. This ensured consistency across the dataset and enabled a transparent comparison of patterns across studies. In addition to descriptive variables, the matrix also contained brief notes on how stakeholders were framed and positioned in each study. Attention was given to whether studies referred to authority, inclusion/exclusion, coordination demands, or tensions between stakeholders. This supported a more interpretive reading of stakeholder visibility and relational dynamics in GI research.

Stakeholder visibility was coded from full texts as the explicit naming of a stakeholder group (e.g., producers, consumers, public authorities, certification bodies, researchers), whether or not authors used the term stakeholder. Only explicitly mentioned groups were recorded; implied groups (e.g., “the market” without named stakeholders) were excluded. Terms such as actors, participants, or rightholders were coded only when they clearly referred to identifiable GI stakeholder groups (e.g., rightholders = producers and/or producer organisations).

Stakeholder categories were coded according to how actors appeared and were represented in the reviewed texts, not according to all functions they could perform in practice. This is important because GI stakeholders are often multifunctional: producer organisations, cooperatives, municipalities, and NGOs may simultaneously perform governance, economic, intermediary, or territorial roles. In this review, such actors were classified according to the role attributed to them in each article. For example, a *producer organisation* was coded as a market intermediary only when the reviewed text explicitly described it in that role. This approach simplifies the multifunctional and relational complexity of GI systems, where actors often occupy multiple and overlapping institutional, economic, and territorial roles, but keeps the coding transparent and consistent with the review’s focus on stakeholder visibility as constructed in the literature itself.

Stakeholder identification relied on manual single-coder full-text reading. Stakeholder categories were recorded only when they were explicitly named or clearly specified in the text. This ensured that the dataset reflected stakeholder visibility as represented in the reviewed literature, without adding stakeholders through inference.

2.4 Analytical procedure

To address RQ1, the review combines descriptive statistics with narrative synthesis. It examines publication trends over time, geographical distribution of case studies, spatial scales of analysis, and the methodological approaches used to study stakeholders. Together, these dimensions provide a structured overview of how stakeholder-oriented GI research has evolved and how it is currently shaped within the broader literature.

To address RQ2, the analysis focuses on the stakeholder groups identified across the final corpus and assesses their visibility and analytical positioning. Stakeholders were coded, counted, and clustered into broader categories, allowing recurring patterns of representation to be interpreted in relation to regulatory arrangements, power relations, and collective action dynamics within GI systems. To address RQ3, the synthesis examines how stakeholder relations, asymmetries, and tensions are represented across the reviewed studies.

3. Results I: Patterns and Characteristics of Stakeholder-Oriented GI Research (RQ1)

This section presents the findings addressing RQ1, based on extraction from the 35 peer-reviewed articles. It reveals how stakeholder-related GI research is structured across temporal trends, spatial dimensions (geographical scope and scales), and methodological approaches, highlighting key patterns and characteristics in the field.

3.1 Temporal Development of Stakeholder-Oriented GI Research

The temporal distribution of the reviewed GI literature indicates a clear shift in both the volume and orientation of stakeholder-related GI research between 2014 and 2024. Two distinct phases can be identified.

The first phase (2014–2018) is marked by sparse and irregular publication output, with one article published per year (see Annex 1, Table 1). Contributions from this period largely focus on legal protection frameworks, sector-specific value capture, and product- or region-centred analyses, typically based on single-country case studies (e.g., Marie-Vivien et al., 2014; Neilson et al., 2018). Stakeholder-related dimensions are more often addressed indirectly (e.g., Uchiyama, 2017) through discussions of rights holders, institutional arrangements, or traditional knowledge than through explicit stakeholder-oriented frameworks. Comparative research designs and explicit discussion of coordination between stakeholders are largely absent.

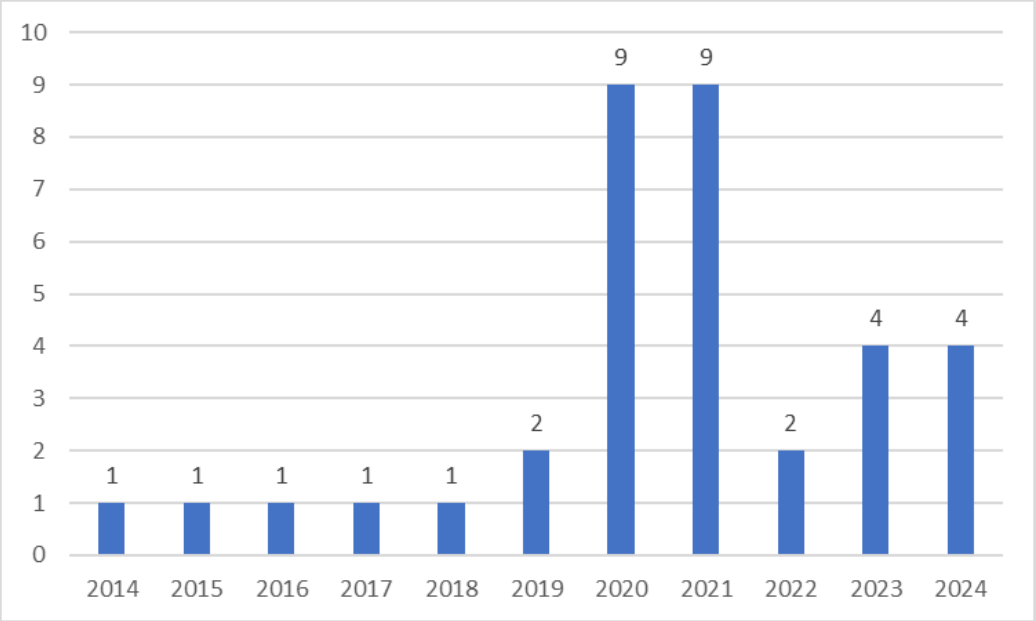


Figure 2. Distribution of included articles by publication year (2014–2024). Source: author

A notable exception within this early phase – also highlighted in the introduction – is *Insights into the black box of collective efforts for the registration of Geographical Indications* (Quiñones-Ruiz et al., 2016), which explicitly examines the collective work of multiple stakeholders during the GI registration process. The study demonstrates how collective outcomes are shaped by institutional settings, group size, stakeholder heterogeneity, and ex ante organisational robustness. Importantly, it also calls for closer attention to cooperation dynamics and the role of social capital in GI governance.

After 2018, the literature expands sharply. Of the 35 reviewed articles, 28 were published after 2020, with the highest concentration in 2020 and 2021 (nine articles each). This acceleration coincides with intensified scholarly interest in sustainability (e.g., Mariani et al., 2021; Millet et al., 2020; Owen et al., 2020; Vandecandelaere et al., 2020), local food systems (e.g., Jantsch et al., 2024), short supply chains (e.g., Kimura & Rigolot, 2021), and renewed territorial development approaches (e.g., Zhao et al., 2024). During this period, GI research increasingly moves beyond intellectual property and region-centred analyses concerns toward broader questions of governance, development, and sustainability. A notable proportion of the reviewed studies were published in the journal *Sustainability*, reflecting the strong integration of GI research into sustainability-oriented debates on rural development, governance, territorial valorisation, and food systems. At the same time, the prominence of this journal within the corpus may also reinforce particular conceptual vocabularies and analytical framings, including the relatively frequent use of stakeholder terminology.

Stakeholders become more visible across studies, although the reviewed literature dicusses stakeholder relations through different analytical approaches and level of detail. Overall, the findings suggest that stakeholder-oriented GI research is a relatively recent and rapidly growing field, with most analytical momentum concentrated in the post-2018 period.

3.2 Geographical Distribution of the Research

The reviewed literature shows a pronounced geographical concentration in Europe, which forms the dominant empirical core of stakeholder-related GI research. Mediterranean countries are particularly prominent, with case studies most frequently located in Spain (4), France (4) and Italy (3). This pattern aligns with evidence that GI registrations and institutional density are disproportionately concentrated in southern EU Member States (Huysmans and Swinnen, 2019). Additional European cases appear in the United Kingdom, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Slovakia, Serbia and Albania. Even in comparative studies, at least one European case is typically included, reinforcing Europe as the main analytical reference point.

Beyond Europe, a substantial share of research is situated in South and Southeast Asia. India and Indonesia are the most frequently studied non-European countries (per each 5 cases) and Vietnam (2 cases). Further case studies examine Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore and the Philippines. Research from this region often highlights institutional formation, implementation constraints and the development expectations linked to emerging GI systems.

Africa and Latin America appear as recurring but less consolidated empirical settings. African case studies include Kenya (2), as well as Tunisia, Morocco, Cameroon, Nigeria and South Africa (one case each), amounting to eight studies in total. Latin American research includes multiple cases from Colombia (3) and Mexico (2), Brazil (2), and single cases from Ecuador and Jamaica. Other regions remain marginal, with Japan appearing in three studies, China two studies, the United States and Turkey each represented by a single case.

Despite this wider geographical spread, European cases remain analytically central. Non-European contexts are often used primarily for comparison or contrast, rather than serving as independent theoretical anchors. As a result, the literature remains strongly oriented toward European rural contexts, while drawing selectively on evidence from Asia, Africa and Latin America to illuminate alternative institutional trajectories.

3.3 Spatial Scale of Analysis

The spatial scale of analysis in stakeholder-related GI research is predominantly supra-local. Regional-level studies are the most common, representing approximately 14 of the reviewed articles. These include analyses of territorially defined regions such as Corsica and the Pyrenees in France, Valle de Toluca in Mexico, the Galápagos Islands, the Bursa region in Turkey, and several GI sub-regions in Italy and Spain.

Inter-municipal and county-level approaches constitute the second most frequent scale (9 articles). These contributions focus on clusters of municipalities or supra-local administrative units, including counties in Kenya, the Cabrales mountain area involving several neighbouring councils in Spain, multiple local areas in Albania, and inter-municipal GI zones.

National-level analyses account for roughly one fifth of the sample. These studies examine GI systems at the scale of entire countries or multi-country groupings, including nationwide

analyses of GI governance and stakeholder arrangements in Slovakia, India, Indonesia and ASEAN countries.

By contrast, strictly municipal-level research is relatively rare, representing approximately 5 articles of the reviewed literature. These studies focus on individual cities or narrowly defined local units, such as the city of Suzhou in China or two municipalities in Niigata Prefecture examined within geopark or Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems frameworks.

Overall, this distribution reflects the territorial logic of GIs, which are more often conceptualised and governed at regional or supra-local levels than within individual municipalities (Bowen, 2010; Crescenzi et al., 2022). At the same time, the limited presence of municipal-scale studies suggests that micro-level stakeholder interactions, everyday governance practices and locally embedded power dynamics remain less consistently represented within the reviewed literature.

3.4 Methods Used to Study Stakeholders

Methodologically, the reviewed literature is dominated by qualitative case-study designs. In the reviewed sample, 9 studies apply a single-case approach, while 11 adopt comparative multiple-case designs. Most contributions rely on mixed qualitative designs: 8 studies use a single method, whereas the majority combine two or more methods within the same research strategy.

Document analysis is the most frequently applied method, appearing in 20 articles either as a standalone approach or in combination with other techniques. The reviewed studies draw on a wide range of materials, including scientific publications, GI specifications and related administrative documentation, policy texts, meeting minutes from GI governance bodies, online sources, grey literature, and media reports. In most cases, document analysis is used to reconstruct institutional settings, regulatory arrangements, and formally articulated stakeholder roles.

Interviews are conducted in 17 articles. Where specified, semi-structured interviews are the dominant format (6 articles). Three studies report the number of interviews conducted (21, 42, and 46). However, the level of methodological detail varies across the corpus, particularly regarding interview sampling, field access, and analytical procedures. These differences reflect diverse qualitative traditions and reporting practices within interdisciplinary GI research.

Participant observation and field-based observation appear in 6 studies. Authors highlight their value for capturing practices “in action”, including production routines, stakeholder meetings, workshops, and visible changes in local landscapes such as facility expansion or infrastructure upgrades. Descriptions of observational procedures and the analytical integration of field data vary substantially across the corpus, reflecting the diversity of qualitative and field-based research approaches within GI scholarship.

Alongside qualitative case-based inquiry, some studies also incorporate more formalised analytical frameworks or mixed-method designs. These include three studies that combine qualitative analysis with descriptive quantitative indicators (e.g., value-chain metrics or

Sustainable Development Goals – related measures). In addition, the review identified single applications of the Delphi method, text-mining techniques, evolutionary game analysis, and formal analytical frameworks such as institutional analysis – based approaches.

Overall, the reviewed literature is strongly grounded in qualitative and case-based approaches. 7 articles incorporate quantitative components, and always alongside qualitative methods. Quantitative components appear less frequently and are typically used alongside qualitative approaches, most commonly through surveys targeting producers, consumers, residents, or tourists.

Across the corpus, relational or network-oriented methods appear occasionally. Stakeholder interactions, coordination processes, and power asymmetries are approached through a wide range of interpretive and case-based methodologies, including interviews, observation, document analysis, and comparative inquiry. Explicit relational techniques such as social network analysis or systematic stakeholder mapping appear less frequently within the reviewed corpus. Quantitative elements typically play a complementary role alongside qualitative inquiry.

Taken together, these patterns reflect a strong orientation toward qualitative and case-based research, which is well suited to analysing situated governance processes and territorially embedded GI dynamics. At the same time, studies differ substantially in how they conceptualise and investigate stakeholder relations, authority structures, and coordination dynamics. These methodological choices possibly influence which stakeholders become visible in GI research and how they are represented. Building on this context, the next section turns to the stakeholders most frequently identified across the literature and the patterns of inclusion and omission that follow from this.

4. Results II: Stakeholder visibility and representation in GI research (RQ2)

This section examines which stakeholder groups are explicitly recognised in the reviewed literature and how their roles are portrayed. Rather than constructing a normative stakeholder model, the analysis traces recurring patterns of stakeholder visibility, inclusion and omission across the corpus, as well as the extent to which stakeholders are treated as relationally connected within GI systems.

Figure 3 provides an overview of stakeholder visibility across the reviewed articles, showing which stakeholder groups are mentioned in each study and how the number and diversity of explicitly identified stakeholder groups vary across studies. Blue shading marks the presence of a given stakeholder category, allowing the figure to be read both horizontally (the stakeholder profile of individual articles) and vertically (the overall prominence of particular stakeholder groups across the corpus). This visual mapping provides a structured baseline for the synthesis that follows, distinguishing between more frequently and less frequently represented stakeholder groups across the corpus. However, the figure should not be interpreted as implying that all stakeholder categories should be represented within each study. Rather, it illustrates which stakeholder groups are made explicitly visible within the reviewed literature and how

attention is distributed across different actor categories. Many studies intentionally focus on particular stakeholder groups or specific governance relationships in greater analytical depth, and such focused approaches are equally valuable for understanding GI systems.

Article ID	Number of Stakeholder Groups	Producers	Producer Organizations	Public Authorities & Regulatory Bodies	Consumers	Knowledge and technical stakeholders	Market intermediaries	Local communities	International organizations	NGO
A01	5	■	■	■	■	■				
A02	7	■	■	■	■	■	■			■
A03	5	■	■	■	■	■				
A04	4	■		■	■	■				
A05	6	■	■	■	■			■	■	
A06	6	■	■		■	■	■			■
A07	8	■		■	■	■	■	■	■	■
A08	5	■	■	■	■			■		
A09	4	■			■		■	■		
A10	5	■	■	■		■	■			
A11	4	■	■	■		■				
A12	4	■	■	■		■				
A13	6	■	■	■	■	■				■
A14	6	■	■	■	■	■				■
A15	7	■	■	■	■	■	■		■	
A16	5	■	■	■	■		■			
A17	4	■		■	■				■	
A18	5	■		■	■		■		■	
A19	4	■		■	■		■			
A20	6	■	■	■	■		■		■	
A21	7	■	■	■	■	■	■			■
A22	5	■	■	■	■	■				
A23	5	■	■	■	■		■			
A24	5	■		■		■		■	■	
A25	4	■		■	■			■		
A26	6	■	■	■	■		■			■
A27	5	■	■	■		■			■	
A28	4	■	■			■		■		
A29	4			■	■			■	■	
A30	5	■			■	■	■	■		
A31	6	■	■	■	■	■	■			
A32	5	■		■	■		■		■	
A33	7	■		■	■	■	■	■		■
A34	4	■		■	■				■	
A35	5	■		■	■			■	■	
Frequency (n articles)		34	21	31	29	20	17	11	12	8

Figure 3. Stakeholder visibility across the reviewed corpus (n = 35; Article IDs correspond to the studies listed in Annex 1). Source: author

Stakeholder-group coverage (in second column of Figure 3) varies substantially across the reviewed corpus, ranging from four to eight stakeholder categories identified per article. Studies focusing on sustainability, biodiversity, or development-oriented GI agendas tend to mention a broader range of stakeholder categories, including NGOs and international

organisations. By contrast, contributions with a primarily legal or policy-implementation orientation tend to identify a narrower constellation centred on producers and public authorities, indicating that stakeholder visibility is partly shaped by thematic focus and research design.

4.1 Core stakeholder constellation

Across the corpus, a relatively stable core set of stakeholders appears repeatedly. Although this core is rarely formulated as an explicit governance model, it recurs across different products, regions, and methodological approaches. This recurring core is also reflected in Figure 4, which synthesises stakeholder visibility and relational themes across the reviewed corpus.

Producers are the most central and undisputed stakeholder group in the reviewed literature, appearing in 34 articles. They are described using diverse labels – such as farmers, growers, artisans, or specialised food producers (e.g., wine, cheese, coffee, rice) – and are typically framed either as individual participants or as members of organised producer groups. In eight studies, authors explicitly distinguish between individual producers and collective producer entities, highlighting the dual status of producers as both rights holders and collective agents within GI systems. The near-universal presence of producers across the corpus confirms the fundamentally producer-centred logic of GIs, consistent with prior research identifying this as a defining feature of GI arrangements (e.g., Bowen, 2010; Crescenzi et al., 2022). Beyond this analytical distinction, many studies also identify a formal coordination layer through producer organisations, consortia, cooperatives, and GI governing bodies, which appear in 21 articles. These intermediary structures typically function as organisational hubs linking producers with regulatory institutions and enabling collective tasks such as specification drafting, quality control, and joint marketing.

Public authorities and regulatory bodies form the second most consistently identified group, appearing in 31 articles. These include ministries, intellectual property offices, regional and local governments, certification agencies, and inspection bodies. Their prominence reflects the institutional character of GIs as regulated quality schemes, in which public stakeholders shape key procedures related to registration, specification approval, monitoring, and enforcement.

Consumers, including tourists and end-buyers, are referenced in 29 articles. They are typically framed as beneficiaries of quality assurance and authenticity narratives, and as demand-side stakeholders whose perceptions support market value. Yet despite their frequent nominal inclusion, consumers are rarely examined empirically through surveys, interviews, or behavioural analysis. In most studies, they remain an assumed audience rather than an analytically engaged stakeholder group.

Taken together, the stakeholder core in GI research is structured primarily around a producer–state axis, with consumers frequently recognised as demand-side stakeholders within this constellation. In this sense, the reviewed literature remains strongly producer–state centric in its construction of stakeholder relevance. The producer–state emphasis reflects the review's

defined search scope. Social and environmental GI scholarship tends to foreground rural development, governance, and institutional coordination, while legal, economic, management, or trade-oriented studies may give greater visibility to market actors, value-chain intermediaries, legal institutions, and international organisations.

4.2 Secondary and episodic stakeholders

Beyond the core stakeholder constellation, several additional stakeholder groups appear with varying frequency and analytical depth.

Knowledge and technical stakeholders – such as researchers, consultants, technical experts, and scientific institutions – are identified in 20 of the 35 studies. These stakeholders are often associated with scientific validation processes, including soil analysis, product characterisation, and historical documentation required for GI registration. Their involvement underscores the epistemic/knowledge dimension of GI governance, where scientific expertise frequently mediates between legal requirements and local practices.

Market intermediaries, including traders, wholesalers, and retailers, are mentioned less consistently. When present, they typically appear as functional elements of value chains rather than as governance stakeholders. Their influence is acknowledged indirectly – particularly in discussions of value distribution, market access, and price formation – yet their role in shaping GI rules or collective decisions remains underexplored.

Local communities – including indigenous groups, women, seasonal workers, and residents – are identified in roughly 11 studies. Their presence is more common in non-European and indigenous contexts (e.g., Sekine, 2021), where GIs intersect with development agendas or cultural heritage claims. However, these stakeholders are frequently treated as aggregated or background categories rather than as differentiated stakeholders with distinct interests and agency.

In addition, international organisations are mentioned in 12 studies, including entities such as the EU, FAO, WTO, WIPO and UNESCO, typically in relation to regulatory frameworks, technical assistance, heritage recognition, or the promotion and diffusion of GI models across regions. Finally, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are identified in eight studies, most commonly in connection with environmental concerns, sustainability agendas, or project-based support for GI implementation.

5. Results III: Relational patterns and tensions in stakeholder representation (RQ3)

The preceding sections mapped which stakeholder groups are made visible in the reviewed literature and how stakeholder coverage varies across studies. Building on this baseline, the present section examines what relational patterns and tensions emerge from the ways stakeholders are represented and positioned in existing research. Rather than assuming that stakeholder relations are systematically analysed across the corpus, the synthesis traces how interdependence, coordination, influence, and contestation are portrayed explicitly in some

studies and only implied in many others. Overall, relational dynamics appear unevenly developed: although multiple stakeholder categories are often identified, fewer contributions examine how they interact, negotiate, or shape GI trajectories through structured relationships.

5.1 Recurrent asymmetries: influence, authority, and uneven participation

A recurrent theme across the reviewed corpus concerns questions of influence, decision authority, and participation among stakeholders. These issues are discussed across a range of studies, although they are approached through different conceptual and analytical perspectives. Stakeholder-oriented GI research most frequently focuses on producers and public authorities, while questions of influence and decision-making are commonly addressed through discussions of institutional roles, governance arrangements, coordination processes, and access to decision-making arenas. While 12 of the 35 reviewed studies refer explicitly to power-related dynamics, the ways in which such dynamics are conceptualised and examined vary considerably across the corpus.

A first recurrent tension concerns how the relationship between public authorities and producers is portrayed. In seven studies – particularly outside the EU – public bodies are explicitly presented as leading stakeholders in initiating, designing, and administering GI schemes. They shape registration procedures, approve product specifications, and oversee compliance mechanisms. Within these accounts, producers, especially small-scale farmers, are more often positioned as implementers of institutional requirements than as strategic co-decision-makers. This pattern is particularly visible in studies from Indonesia, Vietnam, and several African settings (e.g., Marie-Vivien, 2020; Warui et al., 2020; Pick and Marie-Vivien, 2021), where GI schemes are described as state-driven or institutionally “owned”. Across such studies, the relational implication is that formally collective instruments may still concentrate decision authority within public institutions, thereby limiting the scope for producer agency in shaping strategic GI choices.

A second layer of asymmetry is suggested within the producer category itself. Although producers are frequently represented as a unified collective, four studies explicitly highlight differentiation between more influential stakeholders (such as lead firms or producer elites) and smaller or more marginal producers (e.g., Hananto and Prananda, 2019; Bashir, 2020). These accounts suggest that stakeholders with greater financial resources, stronger political connections, or better market access may exercise disproportionate influence within producer organisations and GI governance bodies. By contrast, smallholders, young producers, and indigenous groups are more often portrayed as facing higher compliance costs, weaker organisational leverage, and more limited participation in collective arenas (Fernandez-Zarza et al., 2021; Reinhardt and Ambrogio, 2023). Rather than demonstrating elite capture as an empirically tested mechanism, the stakeholder-labelled GI literature more commonly frames it as a structural vulnerability of collective arrangements that remain internally uneven.

A third cross-cutting dimension concerns expertise and knowledge production within GI systems. Twenty reviewed studies identify scientists, technical experts, and external consultants as key

stakeholders, particularly during GI registration phases. These stakeholders are often involved in translating terroir, authenticity, or quality claims into forms recognised within GI procedures. Several studies show that legitimacy, expertise, and territorial knowledge are negotiated among producers, experts, institutions, and other stakeholder groups within formal GI frameworks.

Taken together, the reviewed corpus repeatedly points to differences in influence, authority, and participation across GI-related stakeholder constellations, although these themes are addressed through diverse conceptual and methodological approaches. Such differences are most often discussed through descriptions of stakeholder positions, institutional arrangements, governance processes, and access to decision-making arenas. As a result, questions of influence and authority emerge across a wide range of studies, but are examined in different ways and with varying degrees of analytical emphasis.

5.2 Cooperation as a stakeholder-framed requirement

Collective organisation and cooperation are frequently referenced (in 27 articles) across the reviewed corpus, most commonly in relation to registration processes, specification-setting, quality control, and collective marketing. Importantly, these themes emerge through the stakeholder-oriented lens of the included studies. Because the search strategy targeted publications explicitly using stakeholder terminology (*geographical indication* AND *stakeholder*), cooperation is primarily visible where authors frame coordination demands, organisational structures, or implementation challenges as stakeholder-related issues.

Within this stakeholder-labelled GI literature, collective action is often presented as a basic requirement for GI functioning and long-term viability, yet it receives uneven analytical attention as a relational process. Several studies describe cooperation as demanding and difficult to sustain, emphasising that coordination is costly, time-consuming, and institutionally burdensome (three studies are explicit about this issue: Quiñones-Ruiz et al., 2016; Millet and Casabianca, 2019; Owen et al., 2020). In these accounts, sustaining collective organisation is linked to administrative capacity, organisational resources, and continued participation—conditions that appear unevenly distributed across stakeholders, producer groups, and territorial contexts. As a result, cooperation is often portrayed less as a stable institutional feature and more as a fragile achievement requiring ongoing support.

This is especially visible in studies where external stakeholders are positioned as key enabling factor, particularly in post-socialist settings (e.g., Slovakia, Albania, Serbia) and Global South contexts. Here, international organisations, development agencies, embassies, and NGOs are described as providing expertise, funding, or institutional templates that facilitate GI registration and organisational development (e.g., Uchiyama, 2017; Mariani et al., 2021). While such involvement is frequently presented as enabling implementation, it also suggests tensions around autonomy, ownership, and the long-term durability of collective arrangements once external support diminishes.

At the same time, stakeholder-oriented GI studies address the longer-term maintenance of cooperation in different ways. Issues such as trust-building, conflict resolution, internal representation, and accountability are discussed across the reviewed literature, although they are often embedded within broader analyses of governance, implementation, territorial development, or collective organisation. Overall, the corpus consistently portrays collective organisation as important for GI functioning, while highlighting a range of factors that shape how cooperation is established, maintained, and challenged across different territorial and institutional contexts.

5.3 External enabling stakeholders and "supported relationality"

A further pattern emerging from the reviewed corpus concerns the positioning of external enabling stakeholders. In 18 studies – particularly those focusing on emerging GI systems – stakeholder constellations are not represented as purely local or producer-driven, but as shaped through external involvement by international organisations, NGOs, and development stakeholders. Such stakeholders appear in the reviewed literature as facilitators of coordination, providers of technical expertise, or promoters of GI models through development agendas and policy diffusion. Their presence is especially visible where local organisational capacity is portrayed as limited or where GI implementation requires external resources to become operational. For instance, French embassies are explicitly mentioned in several studies as external stakeholders that provide support and facilitation in GI-related initiatives (Neilson et al., 2018; Mariani et al., 2021; Sekine, 2021).

This pattern suggests a form of "supported relationality", in which stakeholder coordination is enabled through external support rather than emerging primarily through endogenous collective organisation. While the reviewed studies do not systematically theorise this dynamic, their representations imply recurring tensions linked to dependence, agenda-setting, and uneven influence over GI trajectories. External stakeholders may strengthen feasibility and provide organisational templates, yet their involvement can also narrow local autonomy and shape cooperation through external priorities and timelines. These dynamics are not always examined explicitly, but they represent a recurring relational feature in how GI stakeholder configurations are described.

5.4 Stakeholder visibility and relational articulation

Across the reviewed corpus, stakeholder relations are addressed with varying degrees of explicitness. This pattern should be read in light of the review's intentionally focused search strategy, which prioritised literature where stakeholder terminology is used explicitly. Within this stakeholder-labelled GI research, stakeholders are commonly discussed as distinct actor groups, while relationships among them are addressed through a variety of analytical approaches. Power differences and coordination challenges are frequently discussed, although studies vary in how authority, cooperation, and conflict are conceptualised and examined. As a result, stakeholder configurations are approached through different analytical perspectives across the reviewed

corpus. The corpus nevertheless highlights recurring themes related to communication, coordination, interdependence, representation, and influence among stakeholders. These themes are particularly relevant in studies concerned with GI governance, collective organisation, and the distribution of authority and participation within GI systems. Figure 4 synthesises the main patterns identified across the reviewed literature. It integrates stakeholder visibility (RQ2), recurrent stakeholder relationships, and the relational dimensions most frequently discussed in stakeholder-oriented GI research. Rather than proposing a normative stakeholder model, the figure summarises how stakeholders and their interactions are represented across the reviewed corpus.

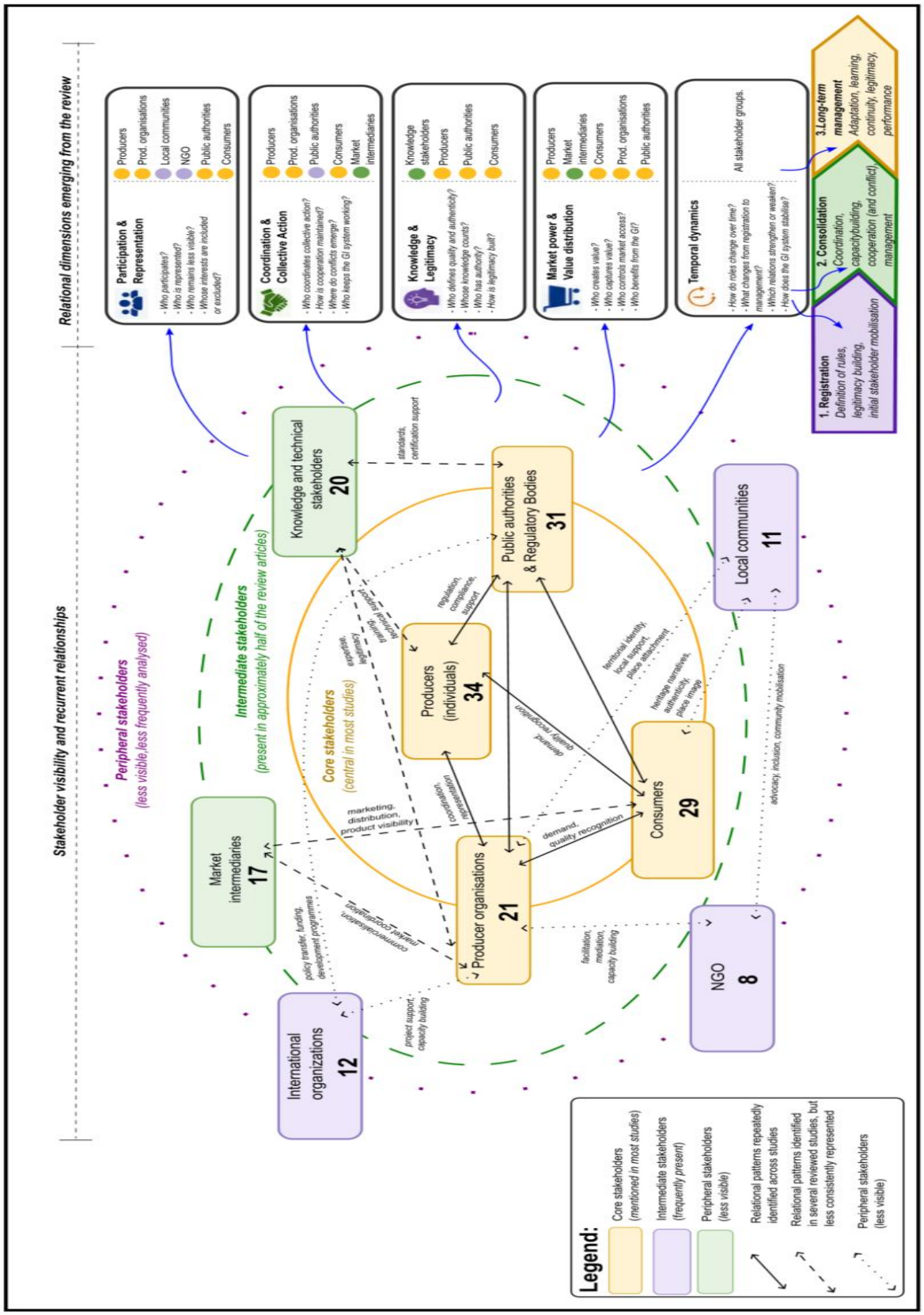


Figure 4. Synthesis of stakeholder visibility, recurrent relationships, and relational dimensions emerging from the reviewed literature. Source: author

6. Discussion

This review contributes to GI research by shifting attention from what GIs deliver to how they are organised and discussed in the literature through stakeholder lenses. While a substantial body of GI scholarship evaluates whether GIs generate added value, sustainability gains, or rural development effects, fewer studies examine how stakeholders are conceptualised, made visible, and positioned in relation to one another. By synthesising the structure of stakeholder-oriented GI research (RQ1), mapping patterns of stakeholder visibility (RQ2), and tracing relational patterns and tensions suggested by these representations (RQ3), the review shows that stakeholders are widely recognised as relevant, yet remain unevenly conceptualised and comparatively difficult to synthesise across different strands of the literature. Across the corpus, stakeholders are more often presented as functional entities than examined as interconnected elements embedded in coordination, negotiation, and uneven participation within GI-related processes.

6.1 What this review contributes to stakeholder-oriented GI research

The main contribution of this review lies in clarifying how the stakeholder-labelled GI literature actually approaches stakeholders. This focus is important because stakeholder terminology is increasingly used within governance, sustainability, and rural-development debates surrounding GIs, yet the implications of adopting this vocabulary have received little systematic attention.

First, the reviewed literature lacks a stable and comparable stakeholder typology. Even the most consistently recognised group – producers – is described with highly uneven granularity, ranging from broad and generic labels to narrowly defined subgroups. This variation limits cross-study comparability and weakens the accumulation of relevant knowledge (e.g., about governance, social capital, networks) across contexts and disciplines.

Second, stakeholder-oriented GI research is strongly shaped by qualitative and case-based inquiry, which is well suited to analysing situated governance processes, collective organisation, and territorial dynamics. Most contributions rely on case-study designs supported by interviews and document analysis. Stakeholder relations are often present in these empirical accounts, but studies vary considerably in how communication, coordination, representation, interdependence, and influence are conceptualised and examined. This variation makes cross-study comparison more difficult, while also pointing to opportunities for more focused relational analysis in future GI research.

Third, which stakeholders become “visible” in the stakeholder-labelled GI literature is not neutral. It largely reflects disciplinary habits, data availability, and often also how GI systems are institutionally organised. Stakeholders that are easiest to identify and study – especially producers and public authorities – are therefore most consistently placed at the centre of analysis. By contrast, less accessible or less formally defined stakeholders – such as market intermediaries, local communities, or marginalised groups – are often treated as secondary, even though they may still shape GI outcomes in important (but indirect) ways.

Taken together, these findings suggest that the stakeholder-labelled GI literature increasingly recognises stakeholders as central to GI functioning, yet the ways in which stakeholder relations are represented and analysed vary considerably across the reviewed literature. This pattern is closely linked to where stakeholder-oriented GI research is most intensively produced, with Europe remaining the dominant empirical reference point.

6.2 Europe as an established GI context and the wider landscape of stakeholder research

The strong European presence in the reviewed corpus is not surprising. GIs are deeply embedded in Europe through PDO and PGI schemes, long-standing national traditions, and sustained policy support (Dias and Mendes, 2018; Huysmans and Swinnen, 2019), especially in countries such as France, Italy, and Spain. Europe therefore provides a well-established empirical setting for studying how GI systems are organised, governed, and maintained over time.

Non-European cases play a complementary but distinct role. Because GI systems in many of these settings are newer or less consolidated, the analytical focus tends to shift from the everyday maintenance of established arrangements toward earlier developmental dynamics: stakeholder mobilisation, rule-making, capacity building, external support, and the negotiation of legitimacy under more constrained institutional conditions.

This divergence is analytically useful rather than merely descriptive. European cases allow researchers to examine the operation of GI systems once organisational and regulatory foundations are in place – producer coordination, certification, legitimacy, and links with sustainability or territorial value. Cases from other regions make visible what precedes that stability: how stakeholder configurations are assembled, how collective capacity is built, and how GI systems gain enough institutional grounding to function at all.

Taken together, these patterns suggest that differences in GI trajectories are shaped less by product type or regional context per se than by the stage of institutional development and the conditions under which sustained collective organisation becomes possible. The reviewed studies also suggest that stakeholder-related questions tend to be framed differently across these contexts. Research in established European GI systems more often focuses on governance arrangements, certification processes, producer organisations, and the long-term maintenance of collective action. By contrast, studies from emerging GI contexts more frequently examine stakeholder mobilisation, institutional formation, external support, and questions of legitimacy during the early stages of GI development. These patterns should not be interpreted as fixed regional characteristics, but they indicate that stakeholder dynamics are often shaped by different institutional conditions and stages of GI development.

6.3 Implications for rural development and collective organisation

Several implications follow from the review for rural research and practice, particularly in European contexts where GIs are widely mobilised as development instruments. As Figure 4

suggests, such analysis can focus on participation, coordination, knowledge and legitimacy, market power, and temporal dynamics, depending on the aims and stage of the GI process.

First, the review highlights the importance of considering a broad range of stakeholders during the early stages of GI development. While the stakeholder-labelled GI literature confirms that GI systems remain strongly producer-centred, long-term outcomes depend on more than producer coordination alone. Collective capacity is often shaped by the presence and effectiveness of intermediary bodies, regulatory stakeholders, market intermediaries and knowledge institutions. A narrow focus on producers during the early stages may therefore result in technically robust specifications, while leaving the organisational foundations of cooperation weak or socially imbalanced.

Second, the durability of collective organisation depends on representation and the distribution of authority. The reviewed studies repeatedly point to asymmetries between public institutions and producers, between lead firms and smaller stakeholders, and between expert knowledge and local practice. These tensions are discussed across the reviewed studies through different analytical perspectives. This issue connects with GI scholarship that understands GIs as collective arrangements or commons-like systems. Ostrom's work on commons governance provides a broader theoretical basis for analysing rule-making, coordination, participation, and collective responsibility (Ostrom, 1990), while related research on commons governance further shows how collective systems depend on motivation, robustness, and shared benefits (Pipan et al., 2023). Within GI scholarship, some studies have applied Ostrom-inspired institutional frameworks to analyse collective action and coordination challenges in GI registration processes (Quiñones-Ruiz et al., 2016), while others have conceptualised GIs more explicitly as commons, emphasising historical constitution, collective efforts, shared responsibility, and heritage-related outputs (Castelló et al., 2023). From this perspective, participation, rule-making, coordination, and collective responsibility become central to understanding how GI systems are organised and sustained over time.

Third, the review suggests that low-performing or inactive GIs are often discussed in relation to stakeholder coordination, collective organisation, and organisational capacity, alongside market-related factors. Many stagnating schemes are discussed in relation to fragile cooperation, limited strategic capacity, unclear organisational roles, and other organisational challenges. From this perspective, revitalisation requires more than branding or value-chain interventions. It also requires investment in the institutional foundations of collective action, including coordination mechanisms, representation arrangements, conflict management and long-term organisational maintenance (Teratoko, 2016).

The review also suggests that stakeholder analysis could be incorporated more systematically into GI planning, registration, and evaluation procedures. Early identification of relevant stakeholder groups, potential asymmetries in representation, and coordination challenges may strengthen the long-term viability of GI initiatives and reduce the risk of formally registered but weakly functioning schemes. In policy terms, this means that GI support should not be limited to

legal protection, product specification, and market promotion, but should also address the organisational conditions under which collective action is built and maintained. This is particularly relevant in the European context, where Regulation (EU) 2024/1143 has consolidated and strengthened the EU framework for geographical indications and places renewed emphasis on the role of producer groups and collective governance. Supporting stakeholder coordination, representation, and organisational capacity should therefore be treated as an integral part of GI development rather than as a secondary outcome of registration.

7. Conclusion and implications for further research

This systematic review examined how stakeholders are approached in GI research and which stakeholder groups are most consistently made visible across the reviewed literature. The findings confirm that stakeholders are widely recognised as central to GI functioning, yet their configurations and relationships are conceptualised and examined in different ways across the reviewed literature. In most studies, stakeholders appear as discrete – or even background – categories, with their roles typically discussed through specific stakeholder categories, governance arrangements, or organisational functions. This matters because the reviewed evidence suggests that GI outcomes – whether framed in terms of sustainability, territorial development or economic performance – are not intrinsic to the label itself. Rather, they depend on how stakeholder constellations are formed, how authority is distributed across key processes, and how collective action is organised and sustained over time.

These conclusions should be read in light of the review's deliberately focused scope. The analysis is limited to English-language, peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2014 and 2024 and indexed in selected social-science and environmental subject areas in *Scopus* and *Web of Science*. It therefore captures a specific, contemporary strand of stakeholder-labelled GI scholarship rather than the full historical, linguistic, disciplinary, or policy-oriented diversity of GI research. This also means that important non-English research traditions, including French-language scholarship associated with the *Systèmes Agroalimentaires Localisés* (SYAL) perspective, remain outside the scope of the review, despite their relevance for collective organisation, territorial embeddedness, and systemic dimensions of terroir. The term-dependent search strategy also means that studies using scheme-specific labels such as PDO, PGI, or alternative relational vocabularies such as actors, producer groups, communities, participants or rightholders, may fall outside the corpus if they do not explicitly connect these terms to geographical indications and stakeholder terminology. Finally, because stakeholder visibility was coded through single-coder full-text reading and based on explicitly named stakeholder groups, the findings should be interpreted as representations of stakeholders in published research, not as direct measures of their actual influence, participation, or importance within GI systems.

The central contribution of this review is to clarify a specific analytical limitation within the stakeholder-labelled strand of GI research. While the stakeholder-labelled GI literature increasingly acknowledges that stakeholders matter, it provides uneven detail on who the stakeholders are, how their roles and characteristics are specified, and how their

relationships shape the performance, legitimacy, and long-term durability of GI systems. From this perspective, uneven GI trajectories are best understood not simply as outcomes of product type or territorial context, but as effects of stakeholder configurations, coordination capacity and power relations within collective arrangements.

The review suggests that future stakeholder-oriented GI research can build on the existing diversity of approaches rather than follow a single methodological template. Since the reviewed literature already identifies a broad range of relevant stakeholders, one useful direction is to examine more closely how these actors relate to one another in specific GI contexts. This may involve analysing communication, coordination, negotiation, representation, influence, conflict, or external support, depending on the research aim. Such questions can be addressed through well-informed qualitative case studies, ethnographic work, discourse analysis, comparative designs, longitudinal research, participatory methods, network-oriented approaches, or mixed-method combinations. The point is therefore not to prescribe a complete checklist for stakeholder analysis, but to encourage clearer attention to the relational processes through which GI systems are organised, contested, and sustained.

Future work would also benefit from treating stakeholder configurations as dynamic over time. Inclusion, legitimacy and cooperation may shift between registration, consolidation and long-term management, yet these transitions remain weakly documented. At the same time, several stakeholder groups have received comparatively less attention within the reviewed corpus – especially local communities, vulnerable labour, indigenous communities and consumers – despite their relevance for equity, representation and benefit-sharing. More municipal-level research could further illuminate the micro-level politics of GI organisation that regional or national studies often overlook.

Comparative research offers valuable opportunities for examining how stakeholder dynamics unfold across different GI contexts. Non-European contexts are still often positioned as contrasts to European institutional pathways rather than treated as independent analytical anchors. Similar caution applies to European post-socialist settings, where governance legacies and collective-action constraints may produce distinct stakeholder dynamics that cannot be fully captured through Western European templates. Overall, stakeholder visibility and stakeholder relations should be treated as complementary perspectives. Identifying stakeholders remains important, while closer attention to communication, coordination, interdependence, participation, and influence can deepen understanding of how GI systems operate in practice. These questions can be addressed through different theoretical and methodological approaches, depending on the aims and scope of individual studies.

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Annex 1: Table 1. Overview of studies included in the review

Article Title	Authors	Year	Journal	Geographical Focus	Article ID (used in Fig. 3)
Trademarks, geographical indications and environmental labelling to promote biodiversity: The case of agroforestry coffee in India	Marie-Vivien, Delphine; Garcia, Claude A.; Kushalappa, C.G.; Vaast, Philippe	2014	Development Policy Review	India	A33
A mountain food label for Europe? The role of food labelling and certification in delivering sustainable development in European mountain regions	McMorran, Rob; Santini, Fabien; Guri, Fatmir; Gomez-y-Paloma, Sergio; Price, Martin; Beucherie, Olivier; Monticelli, Christine; Rouby, Alexia; Vitrolles, Delphine; Cloye, Guillaume	2015	Journal of Alpine Research	Alpine regions of Europe	A18
Insights into the black box of collective efforts for the registration of Geographical Indications	Quiñones-Ruiz, Xiomara F.; Penker, Marianne; Belletti, Giovanni; Marescotti, Andrea; Scaramuzzi, Silvia; Barzini, Elisa; Pircher, Magdalena; Leitgeb, Friedrich; Samper-Gartner, Luis F.	2016	LAND USE POLICY	Colombia; Italy; Austria	A12
Expectations of residents and tourists of agriculture-related certification systems: analysis of public perceptions	Uchiyama Yuta, Tanaka Yushi, Matsuoka Hikaru, Kohsaka Ryo	2017	Journal of Ethnic Foods	Japan	A29
Geographical indications and value capture in the Indonesia coffee sector	Neilson, Jeffrey; Wright, Josephine; Aldimawati, Lya	2018	Journal Of Rural Studies	Indonesia	A02
Sharing Values for Changing Practices, a Lever for Sustainable Transformation? The Case of Farmers and Processors in Interaction within Localized Cheese Sectors	Millet, Morgane; Casabianca, Francois	2019	Sustainability	Corsica and Western Pyrenees, France	A10
The Urgency of Geographical Indication as a Legal Protection Instrument Toward Traditional Knowledge in Indonesia	Hananto, Pulung Widhi Hari; Prananda, Rahandy Rizki	2019	Law Reform: Jurnal Pembaharuan Hukum	Indonesia	A25
Product Qualification as a Means of Identifying Sustainability Pathways for Place-Based Agri-Food Systems: The Case of the GI Corsican Grapefruit (France)	Millet, Morgane; Keast, Valerie; Gonano, Stefano; Casabianca, Francois	2020	Sustainability	Corsica, France	A06
Place-Based Pathways to Sustainability: Exploring Alignment between Geographical Indications and the Concept of Agroecology Territories in Wales	Owen, Luke; Udall, Donna; Franklin, Alex; Kneafsey, Moya	2020	Sustainability	Wales, United Kingdom	A13
Protection of geographical indication products from different states of india	Bashir, Anna	2020	Journal of Intellectual Property Rights	India	A19
Protection of Geographical Indications in ASEAN countries: Convergences and challenges to awakening sleeping Geographical Indications	Marie-Vivien, Delphine	2020	Journal of World Intellectual Property	Vietnam; Cambodia; Thailand; Indonesia; Malaysia; Laos; Singapore; Myanmar; India; Japan	A20

Article Title	Authors	Year	Journal	Geographical Focus	Article ID (used in Fig. 3)
Existing value addition initiatives enhancing recognition of territorial traits of three Kenyan honey	Warui, Mary W.; Mburu, John; Kironchi, Geoffrey; Gikungu, Mary	2020	Journal of World Intellectual Property	Kenya	A26
Food and agricultural product pilot selection for geographical indication projects	Dokuzlu, Sertaç; Pons, Jean-Claude; Vandecandelaere, Emilie; Roggia, Maud; Ricci, Maria; Erdal, Burcu; Gueye, Mamadou	2020	New Medit	Turkey	A27
Strengthening Sustainable Food Systems through Geographical Indications: Evidence from 9 Worldwide Case Studies	Vandecandelaere, Emilie; Teyssier, Catherine; Barjolle, Dominique; Fournier, Stéphane; Beucherie, Olivier; Jeanneaux, Philippe	2020	Journal of Sustainability Research	India; Serbia; USA; Spain; Cameroon; Maroco; Brazil; Switzerland	A32
Utilization of Geographical Indication Protection System for Traditional Handicrafts in Indonesia	Suryasaladin Sugiri, Ranggalawe	2020	Indonesia Law Review	Indonesia	A35
Origin food schemes and the paradox of reducing diversity to defend it	Mariani, Mariagiulia; Cerdan, Claire; Peri, Iuri	2021	Sociologia Ruralis	Marocco; Italy; France	A01
The Potential of Geographical Indications (GI) to Enhance Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Japan: Overview and Insights from Japan GI Mishima Potato	Kimura, Junko; Rigolot, Cyrille	2021	Sustainability	Japan	A05
The Potential and Contradictions of Geographical Indication and Patrimonization for the Sustainability of Indigenous Communities: A Case of Cordillera Heirloom Rice in the Philippines	Sekine, Kae	2021	Sustainability	Montane areas of Cordillera, the Philippines	A07
The will for terroir: A communicative approach	Castello, Enric	2021	Journal of Rural Studies	Catalonia, Spain	A08
Trust and Food Quality in the Valorisation of Geographical Indication Initiatives	Fernandez-Zarza, Mario; Amaya-Corchuelo, Santiago; Belletti, Giovanni; Aguilar-Criado, Encarnacion	2021	Sustainability	Spain; Mexico	A09
Representativeness in Geographical Indications: A Comparison between the State-Driven and Producer-Driven Systems in Vietnam and France	Pick, Barbara; Marie-Vivien, Delphine	2021	Sustainability	France; Vietnam	A11
Protected Geographical Indications for EVOO in Tunisia: Towards Environmental, Social, and Economic Sustainable Development	Clodoveo, Maria Lisa; Yangui, Ahmed; Fendri, Mahdi; Giordano, Simona; Crupi, Pasquale; Corbo, Filomena	2021	Sustainability	Tunisia	A15
Designation of Origin Distillates in Mexico: Value Chains and Territorial Development	Perez-Akaki, Pablo; Viridiana Vega-Vera, Nadia; Paola Enriquez-Caballero, Yuritzi; Velazquez-Salazar, Marisol	2021	Sustainability	Mexico	A16
Implementation of the EU Quality Policy: Case Study, Slovakia	Palkova, Zuzana; Okenkova, Marieta; Harnicarova, Marta; Valicek, Jan; Gombar, Miroslav; Dvorsky, Jakub; Behanovska, Maria; Slaninova, Monika; Reiskupova, Monika; Vnucko, Peter	2021	Sustainability	Slovakia	A17
Assessing the applicability of geographical indications from the social capital analysis perspective: Evidences from Albania	Kokthi, Elena; Guri, Gert; Muco, Elda	2021	Economics and Sociology	Albania	A28

Article Title	Authors	Year	Journal	Geographical Focus	Article ID (used in Fig. 3)
Geographical indications in cheese mountain areas: Opportunity or threat to landscape and environmental conservation? The case of Cabrales (Spain)	Garcia-Hernandez, Cristina; Ruiz-Fernandez, Jesus; Rodriguez-Gutierrez, Fermin	2022	APPLIED GEOGRAPHY	The Cabrales mountain, Spain	A14
Basmati Rice – The On-Going Domestic Challenge	Mishra, Abhishek; Fatesaria, Harshita	2022	Journal of Intellectual Property Rights	India	A34
Geographical Indications and Sustainable Viticulture: Empirical and Theoretical Perspectives	Reinhardt, Tilman; Ambrogio, Yasmine	2023	Sustainability	Franconia, Germany; South Tyrol, Italy	A03
Authorizing the 'taste of place' for Galapagos Islands coffee: scientific knowledge, development politics, and power in geographical indication implementation	Zinsli, Matthew J.	2023	Agriculture and Human Values	Galapagos, Ecuador	A04
Sustainability for stakeholders and the environment? Understanding the role of geographical indications in sustaining agri-food production	Cheng, Denian	2023	International Journal of Gastronomy and Food Science	Suzhou, China	A21
The legal construction of geographical indications in Africa	Adebola, Titilayo	2023	Journal of World Intellectual Property	South Africa; Kenya; Nigeria	A24
Geographical Indication and Gastrodiplomacy as Nation Branding: A Perspective from Indonesia	Mayana, Ranti Fauza; Santika, Tisni	2024	Lentera Hukum	Indonesia	A22
Factors that the specialized literature identifies as limiting the development of GIs: an analysis through the lens of the stakeholder engagement theory	Malaguti, Jane Mary Albinati; Avrichir, Ilan	2024	Revista de Economia e Sociologia Rural	(none) - literature review	A23
Local gastronomy and wine geographical indications (GIs): Framework for identifying pairing potential	Jantsch, L.; Flores, S.S.; Vale, Z. do N	2024	International Journal of Gastronomy and Food Science	Brazil	A30
Research on the Co-Creation Mechanism of Geographical Indication Industry Value Based on Evolutionary Game Analysis	Zhao, Tingwei; Yu, Xiang; Liu, Sishi	2024	Sustainability	China	A31