



One Country One Priority Product • Case Study Series

Highlights

Cambodia: Geographical indication registration of Kampot pepper builds brand recognition, raising producers' income and spurring local development

Despite being a unique spice with special enticing characteristics, Kampot pepper lacked brand recognition, hindering the potential to maximize its value. A solution was to register the pepper as a GI product, which has increased significantly the producers' income levels and raised the potential for further gains through public-private partnerships and increased international marketing.

Key issues: limited brand recognition in the international market and inconsistent quality

Before GI protection and despite its unique heritage, spanning many centuries, Kampot pepper had limited international brand recognition in the high-value markets and was regarded as a low-volume niche product for domestic markets and neighbouring countries. In addition, the product quality was inconsistent due to lack of quality standards.

Solutions: register Kampot pepper as a geographical indication product through standardized methodologies

To build brand recognition, the key priorities were to standardize the product quality and the production method, and to obtain a firm foothold as a fine pepper in the international markets. Attaining GI registration status involved defining the specifications of Kampot pepper collectively and inclusively, followed by the implementation of the required procedures. Promoting and legally protecting the reputation of Kampot

pepper through GI registration was expected to propel sustainable valorization for the Kampot pepper products and improve revenue for the producers and their communities.

Background: a unique, superior pepper rooted in the history and culture of Cambodia

As part of the historical and cultural heritage of Cambodia, Kampot pepper has been known for its superior quality since the thirteenth century. For example, at the 2022 Great Taste awards, organized by the Guild of Fine Food in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, six out of the nine pepper products awarded the maximum of three stars were brands of Kampot pepper.

The unique characteristics of Kampot pepper result from its link with the agroenvironment, which is greatly influenced by weather, coastal climate and soil conditions. The Kampot pepper production zone is in the two southwestern provinces of Cambodia, Kampot and Kep. Local know-how and production techniques (i.e. irrigation and natural fertilization) also play an important part in maximizing the unique characteristics of the pepper, in addition to the specific environmental condition of the production zone.

Implementation

The development of Kampot pepper as a GI product has undergone the following process:

- The Kampot pepper, renowned around the world, is grown in large pepper plantations in Kampot province in the south of Cambodia. The peppercorns, which come in white, red and black varieties, are described by gourmet chefs as having a complex flavour with floral overtones and a mild and lingering taste. Following the registration of Kampot pepper in 2010 domestically as one of the first geographical indication (GI) products in Cambodia, exports of this spice have expanded to reach new high-value markets, enabling producers to attain a significant price premium for the product.
- The Ministry of Commerce (MOC) of Cambodia has put rigorous mechanisms in place to maintain the valorization and credibility of the GI protection for local and export markets while producers of GI products are required to fulfil the requirements and maintain the reputation of their pepper products.
- Kampot pepper farmers participating in the GI production increased from 118 in 2010 to 410 in 2021, and the farmgate price of the product has more than tripled since the GI registration, benefiting not only plantation owners but also smallholders, who have attained higher income from the price premium and resilient export sales, which remained steady even during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- A strong mechanism and enforcement of the GI law by the Government of Cambodia combined with collaboration with the private sector, development partners, and a collective and inclusive producers' association has resulted in great success in promoting the reputation and brand image and maintaining the uniqueness of the Kampot pepper.
- Along with the coveted GI registration, adopting organic and good agricultural practices is also a value-addition and effective way to promote sustainable agriculture production.

(1) Organization: The Kampot Pepper Promotion Association (KPPA) was established in 2009, with support from MOC and Agence Française de Développement, through an international non-governmental organization and a local non-governmental organization. The Association encouraged pepper farmers and other key value-chain stakeholders to learn about and adopt the production of the pepper and processing techniques in its quest to register Kampot pepper as a GI.

(2) Procedures and requirements for GI designation: To prevent the misuse or misappropriation of the “Kampot Pepper” name, a set of common rules, which presents the product’s uniqueness along with its production and processing standards and practices, are necessary. The “GI book of specifications” stipulates the procedures and requirements for GI producers to comply with in order to be authorized to use the GI name “Kampot Pepper” in trade.

The GI book of specifications is one of the three key pillars of the GI system, together with the collective ownership and the inclusive ownership of the GI by the producers, KPPA in this case, and the establishment of strong traceability and control mechanisms through the GI value chain. The traceability and control mechanisms ultimately guarantee the quality of the product and the geographical origin, fostering consumers’ confidence and trust.

(3) Registration as a GI product: Kampot pepper was awarded a GI registration by MOC in 2010, and later

was registered as a foreign GI in the European Union and Viet Nam in 2016 and in Thailand in 2017. The Ministry administers the national GI logo and authorizes its use. Only the producers or operators abiding by the corresponding book of specifications are allowed to use the national logo, which must appear on the labelling of all GI products. In addition, in February 2020, Cambodia became a member of the Geneva Act of the Lisbon Agreement on Appellations of Origin and Geographical Indications, which has effectively extended GI protection across more than 50 countries globally.

Impact

The GI designation has greatly contributed to the development of an efficient value chain and improved market access for Kampot pepper. The land designated for cultivation of the product has increased from just 1 hectare in 2010 to 264 hectares, exclusively in Kampot and Kep provinces. Annual production also has increased substantially, from approximately 20 tonnes in 2013, which is prior to the international GI registration, to 100 tonnes since 2019 (Figure 1).

Following the GI registration by the European Union, Kampot pepper exports have increased significantly, by more than 250 percent in 2017, compared to the average export level over the period 2013–2016 (Sok, 2021). In addition, more higher-value markets, such as Germany and the United States of America, are importing the pepper,

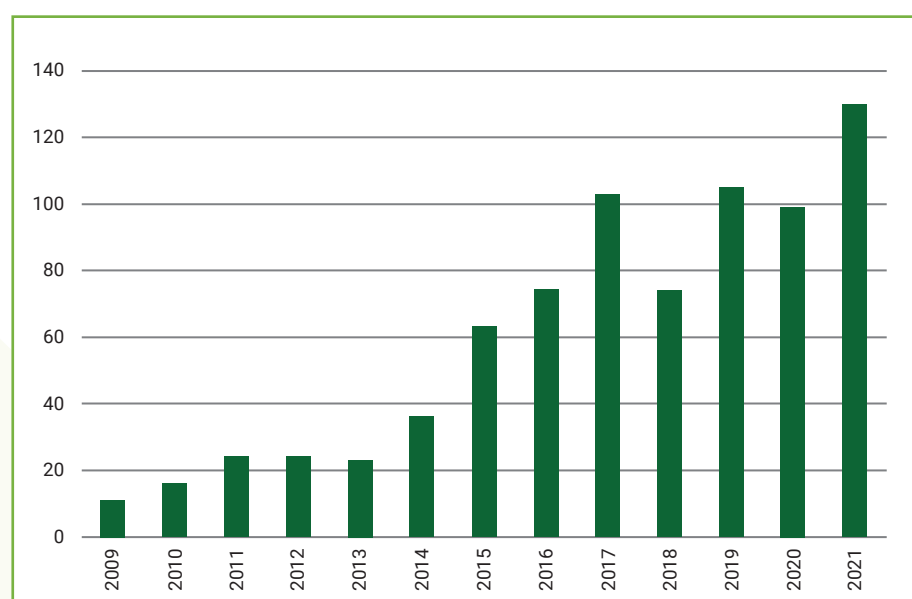
adding to the key export partners, such as France, Taiwan Province of China and Viet Nam. Kampot pepper is now used in many fine restaurants worldwide.

Smallholders have benefited greatly from the GI registration, enabling them to generate more income, which has also led to an improvement in poverty reduction. Data from KPPA show that membership of the Association has increased from 118 producers in 2010 to 410 in 2021 and that the majority of the members are smallholders with fewer than 1 000 pepper poles.

Prices of Kampot peppers have also risen significantly following GI registration. For example, the price of black Kampot peppercorns increased from USD 4.5/kg in 2010 to USD 14.5/kg in 2020, while that for red Kampot peppercorns increased from USD 10/kg to USD 25/kg in the same period. Kampot peppers with the GI registration receive a price premium that exceeds more than two thirds of the price for non-GI peppers (Sok, 2021). Approximately 30 percent of the Kampot pepper production consists of the red and white varieties, which command higher prices.

Additional benefits of the GI registration of the Kampot pepper are recognition of the production region for investments in products’ processing and agrotourism linked to the promotion of the GI designation.

Figure 1. Annual production of Kampot pepper by the Kampot Pepper Promotion Association members in tonnes



Source: KPPA (2022).

Key resources

- Kampot Pepper Promotion Association (KPPA). 2022. KPPA overview in numbers. In: *Kampot Pepper Promotion Association*. Kampot, Cambodia. Cited 5 September 2022. <https://www.kampotpepper-kppa.com/in-numbers/>
- Sok, P. 2021. An analysis of pepper (*Piper Nigrum*) value chains in Cambodia. *North American Academic Research Journal*, 4(1): 107–127.

For more information:

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