

*Full Length Research Paper*

# Traditional foods: Interaction between local and global foods in Turkey

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Accepted 25 February, 2010

Traditional foods play an important role in local identity, consumer behavior, the transfer of cultural heritage for future generations, and the interaction of this heritage with the rest of the world. In many countries, the promotion and protection of traditional food is directed through quality, agricultural and special policies. Traditional foods are protected by registering them in accordance with relevant laws. Due to the effects they have, traditional foods need to be examined from the producers, consumers and marketers perspectives. Traditional foods, beyond being elements to be protected, have also become important instruments in marketing. In fact, considering the cost of developing new products in marketing, traditional foods form a potential in terms of product diversification. Furthermore, in many countries, the demand for traditional foods is observed to increase and using this tendency may bring advantages to especially small and middle size enterprises. Today, traditional foods attract considerable attention as a country's potential resources to create a difference on the market. As Turkey carries many cultural and ecological differences, it has a wide range of traditional products. These products need to be registered with geographical indications to establish trust and to become brands on the market. In addition to the geographical indication in traditional art crafts and agricultural products, an increase is observed in the geographical indication of traditional foods in Turkey. The aim of this study is to evaluate and emphasize geographical indication practices of traditional foods in Turkey and their importance in creating difference in marketing.

**Key words:** Traditional food, geographical indication, rural development, Turkey.

## INTRODUCTION

The fact that, in the globalization process information is accessed faster, markets become closer, and consumers change their lifestyle and consumption preferences, drives firms to search continuously for new products. Traditional consumption structures are observed to change with the entrance of foreign brands and products into the market. Yet, the protection of traditional foods as one of the most important elements of cultural heritage,

and efforts to spread the consumption of these foods increases as well. Through both scholars work and legislation in public spheres and firms' efforts to increase the demand for traditional foods, more effective activities are observed in this field.

Several studies find that, traditional foods are healthier products. In fact, it is stated that traditional foods that are made to last longer through processing with domestic technology (for example, yoghurt, braised meat, dried salted beef, "sucuk", grape molasses, bulghur, cracked wheat, homemade macaroni, "tarhana" (a fermented and dried soup powder mixture containing tomato, yoghurt, flour, and herbs) and pickles) have beneficial effects on health. To illustrate this, yoghurt meets the need for calcium and vitamins are necessary for bone development (Baysal, 2009).

Although, traditional foods have an essential function in rural development and especially in the development of

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**Abbreviations:** GI, Geographical indication; IP, intellectual property; TRIPS, the agreement on trade related aspects of intellectual property rights; TSG, traditional speciality guaranteed; PDO, protected designation of origin; PGI, protected geographical indication; EU, European Union.

small and middle size enterprises (Van Ittersum et al., 2007; Volpentesta and Ammirato, 2008), this situation is not sufficiently exploited (Tregear et al., 2007). This is indicated by the fact that, in many countries registration of traditional foods with geographical indications or marks of origin is insufficient. Therefore, the protection of traditional foods needs to be seriously considered. In many countries, geographical indication (GI) is used as an effective instrument to support the production of traditional food or local products (Birinci, 2008). In fact, as the price of the milk used in the production of Parmigiano Reggiano cheese with an indication of region (PDO), is high, it has positive effects on local development because it encourages producers (Roest and Menghi, 2000).

Traditional foods not only have positive effects on rural economies, but also are considered an effective instrument in preventing unfair competition and brand creation. Geographical indication is different from trademark; yet, they complement each other. Whereas, trademarks only protect the rights of their owners, a geographical indication allows all the producers of a product in a certain geographical area to share the rights. While a trademark can be produced in any locality, products with a geographical indication have to be related to their geographical origin. Many countries recognize GIs as an interpretation of local agricultural-ecological and cultural characteristics (Giovannucci et al., 2009a).

Protection of traditional foods allows the protection of cultural heritage, consumers, and local producers. It allows job creation, and especially an increase of women's contribution to the economy. It guarantees production according to food safety regulations, and contributes to the promotion of a country.

The image of traditional products worldwide and the demand structures of consumers change. Hence, it is important for producers to assess consumer attitudes. In a study by Vanhonacker et al. (2008) conducted in 6 countries in the European Union, it was found that, consumer image related to traditional products was positive (Weichselbaum et al., 2009). In a study by Decarlo et al. (2005), conducted in the USA, 72% of consumers expressed that geographical features, such as soil, affect the quality and taste of a product, and 56% stated that, they could pay 10 - 30% more for a product grown in their own state. Another national study, conducted in 2008 in the USA revealed that 89% of consumers wanted to see more fruit and vegetables from local farms sold at their food stores and that 69% were prepared to pay more for these products (Deloitte, 2008). In a study by Pirog (2004), it was found that consumers that were affected by local mark foods ranked freshness as of prior importance (Giovannucci et al., 2009b). In a study conducted in EU countries, 78% of consumers were found to prefer traditional foods for their quality, and more than 70% know these products to be protected with EU legislation (Supeková et al., 2009). In Turkey, positive developments with respect to both producers and

consumers are observed related to traditional food. At the producer level, especially an increase in the number of registered products is observed, while the change in consumer demand needs to be followed as well. In Turkey, in order to reduce the risk and uncertainty on the market, it is necessary for traditional food producers or marketers to assess consumer behavior.

## THE HISTORY OF TRADITIONAL FOODS

Traditional foods diversify according to a country's cultural riches. Geographical indication and promotion play an essential role in the transfer of traditional foods to the next generations. Because traditional foods are an important instrument in rural development at a local level, several countries have imposed legal regulations related to these. Geographical indications fall under the legal protection of Intellectual Property (IP) as product/origin. The Agreement on Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) defines GIs as those that, "identify a good as originating in the territory of a member, or a region or locality in that territory, where a given quality, reputation or other characteristic of the good is essentially attributable to its geographical origin" (Article 22) (Giovannucci et al., 2009b).

In the European Union, which is an important market for Turkey's foreign trade and for which Turkey's full membership negotiations still continue, geographical indications and the protection of traditional products are embedded in quality policies.

Several regulations exist in the EU for the protection of products with place of origin, geographical indication and traditional features (EU 2009). In the EU, Article 2082/92, and later in 2006, Regulations EC 509/2006 and EC 510/2006, and regulation 1898/2006 came into force. The aim of these regulations is to ensure continuity in production, to ensure the continuous quality of food products, to prevent the abuse and imitation of product marks, and to protect the consumer against deception (TPI 2009a).

Among traditional foods sold worldwide, Beaujolais Novea wine and Quiche Lorraine from France, Kimchi from Korea, Arepas from Venezuela, Feijoada from Brasil, and Silig from Saudi Arabia can be given as examples (INTOWINE, 2009; Topics Magazine, 2010). In fact, when countries' ecological and cultural diversity is considered, the difference and richness of traditional foods becomes apparent.

Traditional food producers need to be sufficiently informed about the economic benefits of Geographical Indication and the opportunities it brings while opening up to the international market. However, producers lack information and awareness of these issues, which is in fact, verified by the findings obtained in a study conducted in Latvia. It is found that, Latvian producers do not sufficiently understand the economic benefits of GIs

(Zobena, 2007), which illustrates the need to inform producers on GI.

In Turkey, too, it is of great importance to create and develop awareness of producers on the economic benefits that traditional foods bring. There is a lack of systematic efforts to this purpose.

## THE DEVELOPMENT OF TRADITIONAL FOODS IN TURKEY

Naturalness, traditionality, effect on rural development, and competition on the world market have drawn the attention of consumers and firms to traditional foods. The increasing demand for traditional food in the world, exhibits a similar structure in Turkey. In terms of food diversity, Turkey enjoys certain advantages in offering local and foreign consumers new tastes. It is essential that traditional foods become trademarks carrying region indications, and geographical indications play an important role in this. To obtain geographical indication registration, the food product should carry common features and it should carry an indication of region. Traditional foods have a taste, aroma, and composition specific to the region where they are produced (Tan, 2004). In Turkey, Cubuk pickles, Turkish coffee, Antep pistachios, Bursa chestnuts, pilav, dolma (stuffed paprika or other vegetables), tarhana (dried fermented soup mix containing yogurt, flour, tomato, and herbs), kebab, baklava and halva are among the hundreds of traditional Turkish food products known.

Through GI registration of traditional foods, protection against similar products and unfair competition (Tekelioğlu and Demirer, 2008), continuity of quality and production conditions, increase in the value of products, and trademark creation are achieved. The difference created with GI provides traditional food producing and marketing firms an advantage in competition. In addition, by protecting traditional foods and existing work areas, new work opportunities can be created at the local level. Moreover, consumers are given the opportunity to become more informed, confident and eager to prefer registered traditional products. According to Bramley and Kirsten (2007), Geographical Indication is an important marketing instrument that facilitates entrance to niche markets and development of niche products (Ilbery and Kneafsey, 1999; Tekelioğlu and Demirer, 2008). With regard to the diversity of traditional food products in Turkey, GIs can serve as a tool to create limited and small markets, that is, niche markets, and to create new openings in the market.

As the registration of Turkish traditional foods with a geographical indication is only valid within Turkey, it is important to follow EU application procedures for them to be treated as registered traditional products in the EU as well. In fact, EU registration is necessary to prevent situations where other countries apply earlier for the registration of a product, and to prevent that registration

is valid at national level only. Therefore, the fact that an application was made for GI-PGI registration of the traditional Turkish food “Antep baklavası” on 10/07/2009 is promising (EC, 2009). However, the fact that despite the diversity of products, there is only one application for registration of one Turkish product in the EU, and an only very limited number of applications for registration at national level, indicates that Turkey does not exploit its sources sufficiently.

In Turkey, the Decree Law and Regulation no. 555 on the Protection of Geographical Indications has been in force since 1995. An amendment was made in the decree law on 15/10/2008 and in the regulation in 2009 (NO: 5805). According to Article 1 of Decree Law 555, the law covers all the definitions and conditions relevant to the GI protection of all natural, agricultural, mining, and art craft and industrial products that comply with the definitions in this law. According to Decree Law 555, the Turkish Patent Institute is the authorized organ for the registration of geographical indications (abroad, applications are submitted to countries that abide by the TRIPS regulation of the World Trade Organization). In GI registration, the aim is to protect the quality of the product in question, to ensure standardized production, and to ensure that the producers of the product in the region in question benefit from the protection of the GI for that product. Furthermore, as the GI cannot be used on products that do not fulfill the required conditions, deception of consumers is prevented, which makes it possible to protect the consumers (TPI, 2009a).

The Decree Law 555 defines Geographical Indication as an indication that marks an apparent quality, reputation, and other features of a product as related to its locality, area, region or country of origin where it is produced, and categorizes geographical indications into two, namely mark of origin and mark of provenance (Decree Law Article 3). Accordingly, Table 1 shows the conditions for a product to be entitled to carry a mark of origin or provenance.

Although the European Union has special systems for the protection of traditional foods such as “Protected Designation of Origin-PDO”, “Protected Geographical Indication-PGI” and “Traditional Speciality Guaranteed-TSG”, Turkish legislation does not include a separate registration system for products with traditional features. A traditional product is a product that has a certain traditional character, which distinguishes it from similar products. For example, “baklava”, “pastırma”, “ayran” (diluted salted yoghurt), yoghurt, “cezerye” (sweetened carrot paste with nuts) are all traditional products; however, when these are labeled with a geographical indication, as is the case with “Antep baklavası”, “Kayseri pastırması”, they go beyond being a traditional product and obtain GI properties (Kızıltepe, 2005).

In the registration stage, there is a need for experts to register the product and to establish its origin. In fact, while establishing its origin, socio-cultural factors, economy, religion, history, migration, education, traditional practices,

**Table 1.** Conditions for place of origin mark and provenance mark (TPI, 2009b).

Place of origin	Provenance indication
The product originates from a locality, area, and region in some special cases, a country of the geographical borders of which are defined.	The product originates from a locality, area or region of the geographical borders of which are defined.
The whole product or basic quality or features of the product originate from the natural and geographical/human features of this locality, area, or region.	An apparent feature, reputation or other feature of the product is attributed to this locality, area or region.
All the stages of the production, processing and other related procedures of this product take place within the borders of this location, area, or region.	At least one of the stages of production, processing or other procedures takes place within the borders of the locality, area or region.

traditional beliefs, stories, legends), ecological factors (flora, fauna, climate, topography, geographical settlement), production related factors (production methods, beliefs, equipment, tools, and raw materials used), and consumption factors (economy, habits, preparation of food for consumption and additives) should be considered. While establishing the origin of a product, a literature survey and field study should be conducted (Şahin and Avşar, 2009).

From 1996 - 2009, 119 products were registered with GI in Turkey, 69 of which are agricultural products and traditional foods. Most registration took place between 1996 and 2002 (Table 2). This number is as much as 9% of the number of food products registered with geographical indication protection in the EU. Of the 119 geographically marked products in Turkey by 2009, 72 (60%) are agricultural and traditional food products, of which 39% are agricultural products and 61% are traditional foods (Table 3). Of the agricultural products with GI, 23 (32%) are fruits, 3 (4%) are vegetables and 2 (3%) are industrial agricultural products. The 44 traditional foods with GI are drinks, cheese, confectionaries, ice-cream, "sucuk" (pepperoni), "pastırma" (salted and dried beef), "leblebi" (roasted chickpeas), honey, meatballs, kebab, "pide" bread, pickled turnip, olive oil, pickles and dishes.

Examples of food products with GI are Cubuk pickles, Antep pistachio, Malatya apricots, Pervari honey, Gümüşhane dried mulberry syrup, Kayseri pastırması (dried salted beef) and Kayseri "sucugu", Maras ice-cream, Ezine cheese and Zile syrup. Of the 44 traditional foods with GI 14 (31.8%) belong to the confectionaries category.

An increase over the years is observed in the number of products that are in the application stage for GI protection (Table 4). By December 2009, applications for GI registration of 114 products were submitted and 85% of these (97) are traditional foods and agricultural products. Among the registered traditional foods for which GI was obtained, confectionaries, cheese, drinks,

**Table 2.** The number of registrations of Geographical indication (1996-2009).

Registration year	Number of registrations
1996	24
1997	1
1998	0
1999	2
2000	3
2001	8
2002	19
2003	14
2004	11
2005	6
2006	5
2007	10
2008	12
2009	4
Total	119

meatballs, pide bread and olive oil form the majority. Considering the product diversity in traditional foods in Turkey, it appears that Turkey has not realized its potential. Moreover, post-registration Geographical Indication management, GI supervision and operation are as important as registration itself. In fact, production needs to be realized in accordance with the production conditions indicated and mark experts should be used in the promotion of the product (Cografiisaretler, 2009). While there is no product classification in geographical indication in Turkey, in the EU, products are classified by law. According to EU Regulation 510/2006, products protected are divided into three groups. The first group consists of agricultural products (ANNEX I), the second of food products (ANNEX I), and the third of agricultural products (ANNEX II). The first group comprises meat and meat products, cheese and other dairy products; fruit,

**Table 3.** Distribution of agricultural products and traditional foods with GI (2009).

<b>Products</b>	<b>Number of registered products</b>	<b>Share (%)</b>
Fruit	23	32
Vegetables	3	4
Industrial agricultural product	2	3
Agricultural products Total-1	28	39
Traditional foods -2	44	61
Drinks	4	
Cheese	4	
Confectionary	14	
Ice-cream	1	
“Sucuk” (pepperoni)	2	
Dried salted beef	2	
Roasted chickpeas	2	
Honey	2	
Meatballs	3	
Kebab	2	
Pide bread	3	
Olive oil	3	
Pickles	1	
Dishes	1	
Sum (1+2)	72	100
Total	119	

**Table 4.** Annual distribution of products applying for GI (TPI, 2009a).

<b>Application year</b>	<b>Number of applications</b>
2003	0
2004	9
2005	13
2006	10
2007	13
2008	32
2009	37
<b>Total</b>	<b>114</b>

vegetables and grains and grain products; and fresh fish and fish products. The second group includes beer, drinks from plant extracts; bread, pastry, cakes, sweets, confectionaries and other baker's ware, and macaroni. The third group covers products such as hay, mushrooms; flowers and plants; wool; and linen fiber.

The EU classification of products that received GI in Turkey is presented in Table 5. As some of the traditional foods in Turkey are classified as agricultural products in the EU, only 19 (only 16% of the 119 products with GI) of the registered food products in 2.3 and 2.4 that fall under “Foodstuff referred to Annex I of the regulation” appear registered. This different categorization also affects the spread of type of products applying for GI. In fact, among

the food products for which application for GI is submitted in Turkey, are the 23 (20% of the 114 products for which GI applications were submitted) products within the categories 2.2, 2.3 and 2.4 (Table 5).

The production and the marketing of traditionally produced foods on an industrial scale is usually difficult due to the difficulty of preservation of original features and the different labor intensive production methods used. Yet, in order not to lose these tastes and to enable their consumption by more people, industrial production of traditional food is encouraged. In Turkey, traditional foods are marketed mostly by the producers themselves within the limited region where the products are produced. Hygiene is as important as the taste of

**Table 5.** EU classification of the products that received GI in Turkey (2009).

<b>Agricultural products intended annex i of the treaty</b>	<b>Registered products</b>
- Class 1.2. Meat products (cooked, salted, smoked, etc.)	4
-Class 1.3. Cheeses	4
- Class 1.4. Other products of animal origin (eggs, honey, various dairy products except butter, etc.)	2
- Class 1.5. Oils and fats (butter, margarine, oil, etc.)	3
- Class 1.6. Fruit, vegetables and cereals fresh or processed.	29
Industrial agricultural products- cotton and tobacco (products that cannot be included in the EU classification).	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>44</b>
Foodstuffs referred to in annex i of the regulation	
- Class 2.3. Beverages made from plant extracts.	4
- Class 2.4. Bread, pastry, cakes, confectionery, biscuits and other baker's wares.	15
Dishes (products that cannot be included in the EU classification).	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>General total</b>	<b>72</b>
Agricultural products intended annex i of the treaty	
	Number of product applications submitted
- Class 1.2. Meat products (cooked, salted, smoked, etc.)	2
- Class 1.3. Cheeses	5
- Class 1.4. Other products of animal origin (eggs, honey, various dairy products except butter, etc.)	4
- Class 1.5. Oils and fats (butter, margarine, oil, etc.)	2
- Class 1.6. Fruit, vegetables and cereals fresh or processed	28
- Class 1.8. Other products of Annex I of the Treaty (spices etc.)	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>42</b>
Foodstuffs referred to in annex i of the regulation	
-Class 2.2. Natural mineral waters and spring waters (discontinued) (1)	2
-Class 2.3. Beverages made from plant extracts.	6
- Class 2.4. Bread, pastry, cakes, confectionery, biscuits and other baker's wares.	15
Dishes (products that cannot be included in the EU Classification).	32
<b>Total</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>General total</b>	<b>97</b>

traditional foods. The legal restrictions are valid especially food packaging and are also valid for traditional products and should be enforced. Informality in traditional food production is a threat to food safety (Us, 2009; Yücel and Yakın, 2009).

## CONCLUSION

The value of traditional foods as an element of cultural heritage and their protection is important. The contribution of traditional foods to rural development, the increasing demand for them, and their function as an instrument to create a difference on the market are on the agenda. These developments have moved policy makers toward legislative activity in this field. Within the scope of the WTO, relevant laws and regulations are introduced in the world, the EU and Turkey. However, the registration

regulations in Turkey are not compatible with those of the EU and the database is different as well. GI registration of traditional foods in Turkey is in progress. Considering the traditional food diversity in Turkey, the number of registered GI foods should certainly increase. Of the 119 products with GI, 60% are agricultural products and traditional foods, 61% of which consists of only traditional foods and of these 44 traditional foods with GI, 32% are confectionaries.

The number of traditional foods under GI protection in Turkey is only 9% of the number of protected traditional foods in the EU. In the EU, Spain, Italy, France, Portugal and Greece are the countries with the highest number of traditional foods under GI protection. In Turkey, there are many traditional food products that need to be registered with GI according to EU regulations. Therefore, in order to protect them on the international market, it is important that Turkey have their traditional foods registered with GI

in the EU. The only application submitted to the EU so far has been for "Antep baklavası". Applications for GI registration of traditional Turkish foods are expected to increase in the future. However, fast action is recommended.

In summary, in order to open up to domestic and international markets, prevent unfair competition, develop rural economies, increase women's contribution to the economy and provide jobs to women especially Turkey, traditional foods are available as an instrument. Turkey should realize its traditional food potential effectively and without waste of time.

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