SOFIG PROJECT

Sustainability in Tuscany's PDO and PGI product supply chains: sharing good practices and accountability

AREPO Plenary Meeting

GI SMART | 1st dissemination webinar for regional actors

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Developing the sustainability report for GIs: the SOFIG project in Tuscany

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Conceptual framework: PDO/PGI products and sustainability

PDO and PGI products are not inherently sustainable, but they embody a **distinctive form of sustainability**

What "sustainability"?

- ✓ Reducing the use of resources, packaging and waste
- ✓ Generating income and added value in local areas

NOT ONLY

… GI sustainability goes further.

Where does sustainability come from?

The multidimensional link between product and territory

1. **Specificity of local resources**
   Resources used in the production process
2. **History, traditions and identity**
   Links with local people and the local context
3. **Collective dimension**
   Shared knowledge and relationships among stakeholders

An individual or business-level approach is not enough → shift to a systemic, territorial approach

Conceptual framework:
The virtuous cycle of product valorisation

From specific local resources ...



Territory and natural resources



Biodiversity and raw materials



Knowledge, traditions and local practices

... to the GI product



... to the wider territory

Value for the territory

Environmental
Sustainable resource management and landscape protection



Economic
Strengthening local supply chains and socio-economic development



Social
Vibrant communities, territorial cohesion and transmission of knowledge



Product valorisation contributes to the conservation and renewal of local resources

Conceptual framework:
Where does the sustainability of a PDO/PGI come from?

The sustainability of a PDO/PGI concerns the entire relationship between product, territory, local communities and collective reputation.
Three components contribute to the sustainability of the PDO/PGI system:

01 **Shared rules in the product specification**

- Effects linked to the reach and actual use of the PDO/PGI

02 **Conduct and performance of businesses in the supply chain**

- Heterogeneity in conduct: average performance as well as its distribution
- Need to collect data on the conduct of single businesses in the PDO/PGI system

03 **Collective action by the Producer group**

- Sustainability as outcome of some of the initiatives carried out by the Producer group

Regulatory framework:
EU Regulation 1143/2024 and GI sustainability

Sustainability is now explicitly part of the GI regulatory framework

Art. 7 **Sustainable practices**

- ➜ The producer group may agree on some **sustainable practices**
- ➜ Non-exhaustive list
- ➜ Standards **stricter** than EU and national requirements
- ➜ **May be made mandatory by including them in the product specification**

Art. 8 **Sustainability report**

- ➜ Purpose: **identify, measure and report** on GI sustainability
- ➜ Prepared **voluntarily** and updated **by the Producer group**
- ➜ Based on **verifiable information**
- ➜ Describes environmental, social and economic **practices and impacts**
- ➜ **Published** by the European Commission

But: What should be assessed? Which indicators? Which procedures?
How can we bridge the "sustainability divide" between small and large PDOs/PGIs?

The objectives of the SOFIG project

Sustainability in Tuscany's PDO and PGI product supply chains: sharing good practices and accountability

Sviluppo Rurale Toscana 2023-2027 | Cofinanziato dall'Unione europea | Regione Toscana

PDO and PGI products face **new challenges: introducing, documenting and communicating environmental, social and economic sustainability practices**.

In light of the changes introduced by Regulation 1143/2024, SOFIG aims to support producers and their groups (protection consortia and associations):

- in **identifying** sustainability practices
- in **codifying and monitoring** these practices, including their impacts
- in **reporting**, through the Sustainability report

The PDO/PGIs involved in SOFIG are:

11 PDO/PGI products, with a specific focus on:

Methodology: a bottom-up, participatory approach

OBJECTIVE

Co-create a sustainability assessment tool tailored to each GI system through a **participatory approach that engages producers and raises awareness**, while **adapting to the specificities** of the product, production system and territory.

1 Starting framework

FAO–oriGIn

Broad, structured framework

442 indicators

2 Approach

BOTTOM-UP

Stakeholder engagement selection and refinement

3 Outcome

ADAPTATION

Indicators aligned with the specific features of the GI system

Structure used to turn sustainability aspects into measurable elements

PILLAR
Which dimension?

→

THEME
What should be assessed?

→

TOPIC
Which aspect?

→

INDICATOR
How should it be measured?

The main steps in the process at product level

For each of the five products involved from the outset, we followed several steps:

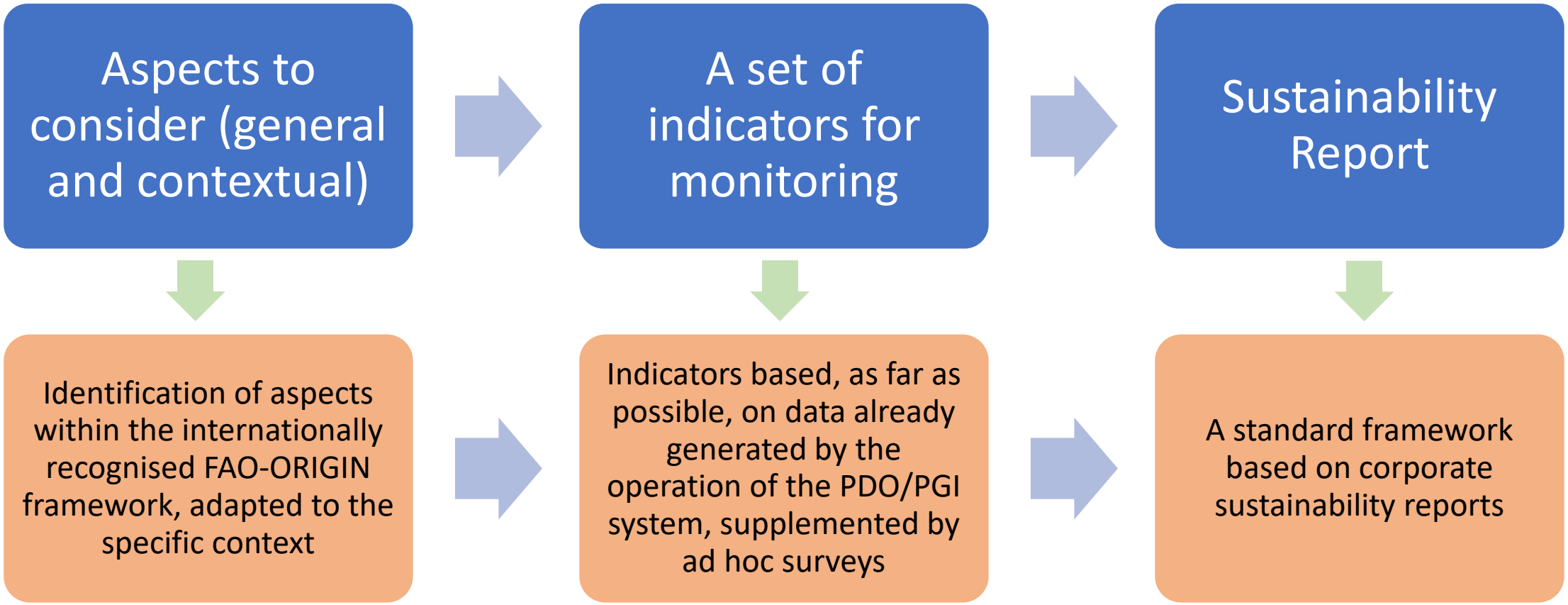
- **Preliminary bilateral** meetings with the Consortium to gain an overview of the product and supply chain
- **First meeting (focus group)** with producer representatives to surface sustainability issues, current challenges and areas for improvement in each production system and its supply chain across the economic, environmental and social dimensions

  →*Consolidation of findings: a framework of significant sustainability areas*
- **Second meeting (company visit)** to identify good sustainability practices and possible indicators to measure and demonstrate the PDO/PGI's economic, environmental and social effects

  →*Consolidation of findings: a table of possible sustainability assessment indicators*
- **Follow-up technical meetings** to consolidate and refine the indicator system, make it operational by identifying data collection methods, and identify other points for the draft sustainability report

  → *Consolidation of findings: sustainability indicator system and draft report*

Main stages in preparing the sustainability report



The methodology for identifying themes, topics and indicators

Define the assessment framework

Objective:
Identify a methodological framework for assessing supply chain sustainability and begin selecting the aspects to analyse

Stakeholders:
Research team
Consortium representative

Output:
First version of the assessment tables

Identify preliminary themes and topics

Objective:
Discuss the selected themes and topics and identify those most appropriate for the product

Stakeholders:
Research team
Consortium representative
Supply chain stakeholders

Output:
Advanced version of the assessment tables

Validate themes and topics

Objective:
Validate themes and topics and identify potential measurable aspects for each topic

Stakeholders:
Research team
Consortium representative
Supply chain stakeholders

Output:
Stakeholder-validated version of the assessment tables

Operationally define indicators and data collection methods

Objective:
Identify appropriate, measurable indicators for each topic and data collection methods (document review or inspection)

Stakeholders:
Research team
Consortium representative
Control body technician

Output:
Operational version of the assessment tables

Test feasibility and data availability

Objective:
Test the checklist's feasibility, indicator measurability, and actual data availability

Stakeholders:
Control body technician supervised by the research team

Output:
Final version of the operational sustainability assessment tables

Overview of themes and topics considered in the initial phase

PILLAR	THEMES	TOPICS
ENVIRONMENTAL INTEGRITY	ATMOSPHERE	Air quality; emissions
	BIODIVERSITY	Ecosystem diversity; genetic diversity; species diversity
	LAND AND LANDSCAPE	Land and landscape management and use; soil quality
	MATERIALS AND ENERGY	Efficient use of inputs; energy efficiency; waste reduction and disposal
	WATER	Interactions with water systems; water use
SOCIAL WELLBEING	WORKPLACE SAFETY, HEALTH AND TRAINING	Workplace health and safety; human capital development
	CONSUMER WELLBEING	Product health and safety; nature-based services supporting physical and mental wellbeing
	CULTURAL DIVERSITY	Local knowledge and traditions
	EQUITY	Gender equality; non-discrimination and support for vulnerable people
	YOUNG PEOPLE AND GENERATIONAL RENEWAL	Entry of new generations; young people in leadership roles; mentoring and onboarding pathways
	EXTERNAL COLLABORATIONS	External collaborations
	EMPLOYMENT	Employment stability; working and contractual conditions
	WORKERS' RIGHTS	Working and contractual conditions
ECONOMIC RESILIENCE	BUSINESS PROFITABILITY	Overall business profitability
	PRODUCERS IN THE PDO/PGI SYSTEM	Number of PDO/PGI producers
	PGI UPTAKE	Trend in GI production volume
	PROFITABILITY	Prices; costs; profitability
	RESILIENCE	New geographic markets; stability of commercial relationships
	LOCAL ECONOMY	Local economic activity; investment in the territory; food and wine tourism linked to the product

Defining relevant themes, topics and aspects: a closer look at the environmental pillar, Toscano PGI Olive Oil

THEME	TOPIC	TOPIC DEFINITION	QUESTIONS — TOSCANO PGI OLIVE OIL	ASPECTS TO CONSIDER	AVAILABLE OR OBTAINABLE DATA
Biodiversity	**Genetic diversity**	Presence and maintenance of local olive varieties and cultivars, which strengthen the link with the territory and the adaptability of olive growing.	• Do PGI farms maintain native varieties or a range of olive cultivars? • Is varietal diversity recorded during inspections, or can it be estimated from cultivated areas? • Does the PGI contribute to conserving local olive-growing heritage?	• Preserve native varieties • Maintain varietal diversity in olive groves • Link cultivars, territory and the product's recognisable quality	Number of native varieties present or recorded. Estimated area by variety or cultivar. Information available from inspections, farm-level data or technical studies.
Land and landscape	**Soil quality**	Ability of olive-growing practices to preserve soil fertility, limit degradation and help prevent erosion.	• Do farms use soil-friendly agronomic practices? • Are olive groves located on terraces or in areas at risk of erosion? • Does olive-grove management help maintain the traditional agricultural landscape?	• Pruning and targeted management of olive groves • Avoiding burning or finding beneficial uses for residues • Presence of terraced olive groves or groves in sensitive areas • Erosion-control function of root systems	PGI area on terraces or in erosion-prone zones. Farms participating in eco-schemes or agri-environmental measures relevant to olive growing. Possible cross-referencing with territorial data, ARTEA/SIAN or GIS systems.
Materials and energy	**Energy efficiency**	Ability of olive mills to reduce energy consumption through more efficient technologies, equipment and processing methods.	• Do olive mills monitor energy use in relation to the volume processed? • Do they use two-phase plants or other lower-energy technologies? • Is renewable energy generated on site or otherwise used?	• Two-phase plants • Cold extraction and process optimisation • Purchased and self-generated energy • Renewable energy sources and energy-efficiency measures	Purchased and self-generated energy use per volume of product processed. Number of two-phase plants as a share of all plants. Processing capacity of two-phase plants as a share of total capacity. Share of renewable or self-generated energy.

It is important to cover every aspect relevant to the product, including less «comfortable» topics
→ involving independent external stakeholders in the design phase can provide a safeguard

Indicator examples – Pecorino Toscano PDO

Pillar	Theme	Topic	Indicator
ENVIRONMENTAL	Atmosphere	Emissions	Share of renewable energy (purchased + self-generated) / total energy consumption
	Materials and energy	Whey management	Whey reused as animal feed (at the dairy or a nearby farm) / total whey produced
SOCIAL	Equity	Gender equality	Number of women employees / total number of employees
			Number of women among employees by role across different activities or functions
	Young people and generational renewal	Entry of new generations	Employees under 40 / total number of employees
ECONOMIC	Use of the PDO	Trend in PDO production volume	Pecorino PDO production / total pecorino cheese production (by volume)
			Pecorino PDO production / total pecorino cheese production (by value)
			Certified Pecorino PDO volume / total volume eligible for PDO certification (%)
	Profitability	Prices	Average ex-farm sale price of 4-month aged Pecorino PDO / average ex-farm sale price of non-PDO pecorino aged 4 months
			Average ex-farm sale price of fresh Pecorino PDO / average ex-farm sale price of fresh non-PDO pecorino

Topics and indicators selected by pillar and product

Pilot product / certified supply chain	Environmental pillar KPIs	Economic pillar KPIs	Social pillar KPIs	Total indicators
Toscano PGI Olive Oil	26	29	22	77
Terre di Siena PDO Olive Oil	27	30	16	73
Seggiano PDO Olive Oil	27	28	16	71
Pecorino Toscano PDO	18	22	22	62
Mugello Sweet Chestnut PGI	16	30	16	62

Sustainability report template

RELAZIONE DI SOSTENIBILITA'

OLIO TOSCANO IGP

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BOZZA RELAZIONE DI SOSTENIBILITA'
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Implementing the sustainability report

1) Moving from design to implementation requires **investment** in sourcing and organising data

- Maximise the information already available
  - *Integrate the indicator system with the control body (CB) / certification activities*
  - *Connect with ARTEA data and other farm-level data*
- Businesses in the PGI system need to cooperate by providing data through tailored questionnaires

2) Balance the **collective perspective with the situation of individual businesses**: whether and how to report differences in their sustainability performance

3) Adopt a monitoring approach that supports **improvement over time**

- Find benchmarks (which may be difficult)
- Repeat the survey over time (annually, every two years, or a mixed approach?)

4) Take a **progressive approach**: step-by-step contents development

5) Build **credibility**: Transparency / Independent actors / Guarantee committee

Possible uses of the sustainability report

- **Demonstrate—not just claim—the "social" added value of the PGI system:**
  - Be accountable to all stakeholders
  - Strengthen engagement with local communities and the territory
- Support **improvement within PGI businesses**:
  - Define shared metrics and replicable good practices
  - Identify areas for improvement and achievable objectives
- **Differentiate the product in final and intermediate markets:**
  - Strengthen product positioning and support pricing strategies
  - Meet the needs of intermediary buyers
- Identify possible **amendments to product specifications** and develop voluntary practices
- **Meet an ethical imperative**

Overall, the sustainability report should be more than a communications document: it should be a governance tool. The data collected can help the Consortium identify challenges, set improvement goals and guide future decisions across the supply chain.

The required policy support

1) **Support producer groups in preparing the sustainability report**:
   - Not only through investment …
   - … but also through facilitation and capacity building
2) **Make the system credible**:
   - Standardise minimum content by setting basic requirements for sustainability reports
   - Oversee and verify accuracy: establish public oversight of reports—at what level, national or European?
3) **Help reports reach their intended audience**:
   - “The Commission shall make the sustainability report public” (Art. 8, Regulation 1143/2024): ensure visibility and access
   - Inform consumers, both end consumers and intermediaries, through appropriate public campaigns

Thank you for your attention



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