

A New Research Center on Geographical Indications Established

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On 19 July 2024, the Geographical Indication Research Center was established at the Institute of Geographic Sciences and Natural Resources Research, Chinese Academy of Sciences (IGSNRR-CAS). At the opening ceremony, Professor Cui, Shengxian, Deputy Director General of the IGSNRR-CAS, announced the institute's decision on the establishment of the center (Figure 1). He indicated that the new center is a new milestone of the institute in his long history, it will not only empower geographical sciences, but also increase its impact for the green transition and regional sustainable development.

More than a hundred of officers, scientists and business leaders from government, universities and enterprises witnessed the establishment of center. The meeting was chaired by Professor Wang, Zhenbo, Deputy Director of the center.

Professor Liu, Yanhua (Figure 2), the Chair of the Advisory Group for the Geographical Indications Environment and Sustainability (GIES), one of the Innovation China Initiative of China Association on Science and Technology (CAST) delivered a supporting letter. He pointed out that China had a long history, vast territory, diverse climate, profound culture, and extremely abundant geographical indication resources. It was a product of the gifts of heaven and human history, which had both natural endowments and the accumulation of human civilization over the years. Geographical indication products had been included in the intellectual



Figure 1 Professor Cui, Shengxian announced the decision of the institute on the establishment of the GISE

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property agreement in the world trade system, emphasizing the protection of origin and trademarks. It was also one of the important intellectual property rights stipulated in the Civil Code. Geographical indication products cannot be simply explained as the local specialties, they contain special meanings such as region (area), quality characteristics and their stability, historical sedimentation and objectivity of reputation, as well as the integration of nature and culture.

Professor Zhang, Guoyou, Vice President and Secretary General of Geographical Society of China, highly praised the establishment of the center (Figure 3). He said that this was a milestone in the Chinese geographical community, which will not only fill the gap in geography research, but also link it to village sustainable development. He emphasized that since 2021, the GIES program launched jointly by the Geographical Society of China, the IGSNRR-CAS and other units has had a profound impact on

the research work of geographical indications, especially highlighting the pioneering role of Professor Liu, Chuang in this process. He hoped that the center may further promote new achievements in the research of all geographical indications, geographical special products, and geographical culture products. To this end, Professor Zhang, Guoyou provided three suggestions: firstly, the center should establish and improve a standard system for high-quality geographic products; secondly, the center may pay more attention to the study the scientific and practical significance of geographical indications; thirdly, the center should strengthen data acquisition to promote the integration of digital and green economic transformation, and finally, the Geographical Society of China will further strengthen its organizational construction, do a good job in formulating and certifying environment protection standards for better products, better nutrition, better environment and better life, leaving no one behind, which FAO indicated in its One Country One Priority Product Initiative.

Professor Cheng, Jingen, Deputy Director General of the Department of Quality Country of Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs of China, expressed warm congratulations to the establishment of the GI center in IGSNRR-CAS (Figure 4). He shared his experience in the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, from quantity growth, to food safety, and to quality control for agriculture products. He pointed out that geographical indication product was not only a quality control, but also an intellectual property right, and a comprehensive



Figure 2 Congratulatory letter from Professor Liu, Yanhua, Chair of the Advisory Group for the GIES



Figure 3 Speech by Professor Zhang, Guoyou, Vice President and Secretary General of Geographical Society of China



Figure 4 Speech by Professor Cheng, Jingen



Figure 5 Professor Song, Xianfang, Director of the GI research center, delivered a report titled “Positioning, Objectives, and Work Plan of the GI research center” at the meeting

empowerment of geographical culture. He hoped that the center could produce a deep understanding of the research, providing advising for the local people and farmers. He also hoped that the center can help the industry development and consumers’ quality of life. Finally, he expressed his desire to collaborate with all parties, hoping to establish multifaceted and multidisciplinary research cooperation, carry out joint research, and jointly promote the development of geographical indication products.

Professor Song, Xianfang (Figure 5), Director of the center, reviewed the achievements made during the past three years and pointed out that the GI research center will be a window and platform for the institute to conduct research on the environment protection and sustainable development. The main tasks of the center were:

(1) Exploring the theory, methods and regional differentiation pattern of modern comprehensive geography research centered on geographical indications;

(2) Conducting research on the series of geographical indication standards to ensure the standardization of the quality and reputation of geographical indication products.

Developing a batch of independently owned GIES observation equipment to support the acquisition and analysis of scientific data, and establishing a nationwide GIES ground station observation network to improve data acquisition capabilities;

(3) Promoting the implementation of GIES projects, protecting and improving the ecological environment of geographical indication products through technological means, exploring the cultural connotations of geographical indications, enhancing the cultural added value and market competitiveness of products;

(4) Proposing a solution for implementing the SDGs in geographic science, to assist in the development of new quality productivity, rural revitalization, and high-quality development, further promoting the construction of a beautiful China, supporting national science and technology diplomacy, building a community with a shared future for mankind, and leveraging the important role of geographic technology in social development;

(5) Promoting the teams work and ensuring the research continuity and sustainability.

Professor Liu, Chuang (Figure 6) pointed out that currently, promoting the United Nations’ sustainable development goals, and the high-quality development of the country are the primary tasks of socialist construction, the theoretical research of geography lags behind

social development to a certain extent, especially in the context of the global call for green development and China's advocacy for a community with a shared future for mankind, geography urgently needs to provide practical and feasible solutions from grassroots villages to the international global level. To this end, she led the team to launch the Decade Initiative on GIES (2021–2030). Focusing on geographical indications, geographical characteristics, and geographical traditional products, the initiative started from six dimensions: variety, quality, appearance, brand, morality, and taste. By utilizing open science, geographical big data, and Internet of Things technologies, and through the Global Change Research Data Publishing & Repository World Data Center, the initiative integrated science, technology, engineering, standards, and culture. It established a case traceability and intellectual property rights protection system. By participating in the China International Fair for Trade in Services, organizing the GIES New Year Fair, holding joint exhibitions with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, and participating in the China-EU Geographical Indications Expo, the initiative effectively promoted the organic connection of various links in the research of geographical indications and fostered healthy development.

She pointed out that modern integrated geography is the core theory of geographical indication research, and its current important task was to transform: (1) from regional scale mostly to the local to regional scales by bottom up methodology, including village, towns, county scales and then global scales including country region and globally; (2) from factor research to comprehensive analysis of geographical diversity; (3) on the principles of regional differences to regional cooperation; (4) from descriptive expression to digital transformation; (5) from individual person research to intelligent systems; (6) from publishing article only to a comprehensive and practical approach.

At the same time, she emphasized a research methodology that combines bottom-up and top-down approaches, with GIES as the starting point and the integration of data and reality as the driving force, to expand the field of integrated geography research. In addition, she emphasized the importance of combining technology and law, advocating for effective protection of intellectual property rights through a parallel approach between technology and law. Against the backdrop of the new opportunities brought about by the construction of a unified national market, we aim to promote the development of local specialty products on a larger stage by combining the construction of geographical indication product distribution centers with their place of origin. Finally, Professor Liu said that the geographical indications with modern comprehensive geography will have a broad and profound field, which was also an important lever for geography to influence and lead the trend of social development in the coming decades.

Dr. Zhang, Songmei, Deputy Director General of the Big Data Development Center, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs of the People's Republic of China, congratulated



Figure 6 Professor Liu, Chuang, delivered a report at the meeting

the establishment of the GI research center and emphasized its significant importance as a carrier for GIES work. Looking back on her personal career, she deeply feels that agricultural products are a fully integrated industry chain and an extremely complex process. She emphasized that data plays an important role in product quality, food safety, and promoting agricultural modernization. Taking this opportunity, she introduced the positioning of the Big Data Development Center, which is committed to data collection, computation, application, and has launched the “full agricultural code” technology to achieve industry chain information docking and data correlation, and improve the traceability of quality and industry chain in the future.

Professor Dai, Erfu, head of Lhasa Ecological Research Station, pointed out in his speech that the Lhasa Ecological Research Station mainly focuses on the unique ecological environment and geographical characteristics of the Qinghai Xizang Plateau, including the research work on fragile ecological restoration technology, artificial grassland and natural grassland selection varieties, and farmers’ income increase.

Professor Fu, Jingying, the Principle Investigator of the GIES Case on Rice Permanent Farmland in Lanjia Village, Jilin Province of China, said that she was fortunate to participate in and witness the development of this project from its inception to the present day. In the past three years, the team represented by Professor Liu has conducted extensive innovative and exploratory research and practice in the field of geographical indication products. She emphasized that GIES cases have enabled villagers to truly feel the changes brought about by technology, not only achieving good results in social and economic benefits, but also becoming a pathway for technology empowerment to support high-quality local development. In the next step, that GIES cases will pay more attention to achieve sustainable development in terms of standards, markets, and benefiting society.

Chi, Hanghang, Director of Fengxian Public Data Center, said three GIES cases were identified from Fengxian County since 2021. They were: Fengxian Burdock (*Arctium lappa*) Ancient Yellow River Flooding Area Case, Fengxian Pear Ancient Yellow River Floodplain and Fengxian Apple in the Ancient Yellow River (Dashuhe). Fengxian County has been an active participant in the GIES activities. Fengxian County successfully co-organized the 2023 Conference on GIES of the Ancient Yellow River Basin and GIES products exhibition together with FAO OCOP (One Country, One Priority Product) in Asia and the Pacific Region. In supporting GIES, Fengxian County and its big data center supported the Online Mall of GIES products, which was convenient for people to order the high-quality agriculture product countrywide. 34 products from 17 GIES cases already online.

Mr. Hua, Liming from China Ecological Civilization Research and Promotion Association stated that following the green and digital transformation strategy of China, three recommendations were made. Firstly, the center should strengthen research on regularity, mechanisms, standards, and culture to provide scientific support for the decision making. Secondly, the GI research center may become a good helper for local practice and innovation, by providing professional guidance and technical support, promoting high-quality development and ecological civilization construction, and playing the role of the national high level. Finally, the center may act as an effective promoter of geographical indication publicity, and disseminate the successful model and share its experience openly available to all of the world.

Professor Liu, Yizhuo from Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic

Cooperation elaborated on the key role of GI products in promoting consumption upgrading, international trade growth, and rural revitalization. She pointed out that branding will play an important role to enhance consumer upgrading, to add value through the brand. In response to the challenges facing the current international trade, Professor Liu emphasized that GI products will enhance the added value of agricultural products with their uniqueness and high quality. Finally, she indicated it was an opportunity that the combination of agricultural products with natural and cultural resources through the GI research center platform to create a higher quality brand.

Mr. Yang, Shuanchang, President of the China-Europe Association for Technological and Economic Cooperation, congratulated the establishment of the GI research center. On behalf of the European Commission, the European Union, and the organizing committee of the Global Geographical Indications Products Expo, he invited the center to participate in the “Third China International Geographical Indication Products Expo” to be held in Luzhou, Sichuan from September 20th to 22nd this year. He hoped that the team of the GI research center of the IGSNRR-CAS, could further explore the connotation of geographical science, form a systematic theoretical knowledge system, and provide scientific support for the protection and development of geographical indication products.

Professor Mao, Kebiao of the Institute of Agricultural Resources and Regional Planning, CAAS, put forward three suggestions. Firstly, he highly praised the establishment of the GI research center, believing that it is a very good theme that not only represents local traditional culture and knowledge, but also an important manifestation of intellectual property rights. He is particularly grateful for the hard work of the researchers at the IGSNRR-CAS, who have elevated the research and practice of geographical indications to new heights. At the same time, he believes that geographical indication products need to be further promoted to make local people aware of their unique value and importance, thereby stimulating their awareness of protection. Secondly, Professor Mao, Kebiao emphasized the importance of product traceability for food safety in the current Chinese social context. Geographical indication products should take the lead in establishing a traceability system to ensure that every product can be traced back to its production source, which helps to enhance consumer trust. Finally, Professor Mao, Kebiao hoped that under the guidance of the GI research center, China’s geographical indication products will continue to improve, further promoting high-quality development to new heights.

Professor Yun, Wenju, Director of the Technology Innovation Center of Land Engineering, MNR, sent a congratulatory letter, expressing warm congratulations on the establishment of the GI research center. He pointed out that China’s economic and social development has entered a new stage of high-quality development, and the Chinese people have stepped into the era of high-quality life. Everyone’s enjoyment of high-quality, safe and healthy agricultural products has become the new demand of the new era. The production, supply, innovation and governance of high-quality geographical indication products has become an important new direction of scientific exploration. The establishment of the GI research center of the IGSNRR-CAS conforms to the requirements of the development of the times, and will make a major support for effectively promoting the new experience of happiness of the Chinese people. The Technology Innovation Center of Land Engineering has always taken the development, utilization, renovation and protection of high-quality agricultural land

resources as the main direction, and is willing to strengthen substantive cooperation with the GI research center to jointly promote the modernization of natural resource element guarantee and land and space governance.

Ms. Liang, Ying, Chief Advisor of the Traditional Chinese Medicine Trading Center (TCMTC), introduced the model of the TCMTC. The center monitors the main production areas through satellite remote sensing, designs trading models, reduces circulation links and losses, establishes storage and supervision warehouses, and realizes product value return. She emphasized that the trading center hopes to establish deep cooperation with the GI research center in IGSNRR-CAS.

Ms. Ren, Haimei, a Consultant of Xiangmi Technology (Beijing) Co., Ltd., introduced the Panama's coffee and its ecological environment, long history and its unique variety characteristics and roasting techniques. Ms. Su, Yan, Chairman of Guangxi Guipinyun Information Technology Co., Ltd., reviewed the launch of the Lipu Taro-Rice Rotation Permanent Farmland Case in Lipu, Guangxi, which has made Guangxi fortunate to become a GIES case products. She expected to continue work with the GIES team in Guangxi region. Mr. Zhang, Qi, Deputy General Manager of Beijing Zhongke Life Service Co., Ltd., shared the planning and vision of the Park Service Center of the Chinese Academy of Sciences.



Figure 7 Photo of meeting venue

Professor Chen, Shengbo from Jilin University, as the Principle Investigator of the Panshi Chinese Cherry Apple case, shared his sense of responsibility and mission as the chief scientist. He emphasized that as a professor, writing papers not only means collecting data and publishing a paper, but also transforming scientific research products into practical results, and the process of transforming products into brands, which was the strong driving force that inspires chief scientists.

Professor Wang, Zhenbo summarized the opening ceremony.