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“Bridging the gap between increasing knowledge and decreasing resources”

## Geographical Indications of Handicrafts: A Tool to Improve Livelihood and Protect Biodiversity in Remote Communities?

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### Abstract

As home of a great diversity of climates and cultures, Colombia has a high potential to protect geographical indication (GI) handicrafts linked to their origin through a combination of natural and human factors, attributing uniqueness to the product. Natural factors are derived from the variety of local ecosystems, such as the Amazon Basin or the high mountains of the Andean region. Human factors are derived from the traditional knowledge, local knowhow and cultural practices of the inhabitants, concerning the production and processing of handicraft products.

The promotion of GI certifications brings an important market differentiation value to the artisanal products, in order to be able to compete with industrial products. Further GI certifications allow to preserve traditional knowledge of handicraft products and can be used as a tool to protect the biodiversity through a sustainable use of natural raw materials and production system to elaborate the handicrafts.

The field study carried out in 2013 and 2014 aims to analyse the production system of potential GI handicrafts and the current situation of their producing communities in rural areas, with the target to assess the possible benefits of an individual GI approach. The study involved direct interviews and surveys with key stakeholders, group discussions with associations of artisans as well as government officials and visits of the workshops and the raw material producers.

The research findings show a lack of structure and weaknesses of the national legal framework in Colombia. The producers are not benefiting from an added value of a GI certification due to missing management of the certification, limited collective action among associations and producers as well as an unsustainable use of natural resources for the production.

To reach an improvement of the livelihood of the artisans and protect the biodiversity, a strengthening of the national legal framework as well as an inclusion of environmental sustainability criteria for a sustainable utilisation of raw materials is strongly recommended. Further a rigorous management of the certification and a raise of the awareness among the producers on the certification guidelines are required.

**Keywords:** Biodiversity, *Brosimum rubescens*, *Calamagrostis effusa*, *Carloduvica palmata*, Colombia, geographical indication (GI), handicraft, human factor, natural factor, rural development

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