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## Identifying the Potential of Ghana ‘pona’ Yam for Geographical Indication (GI) Labelling

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### Abstract

Consumers worldwide demand more unique origin products featuring a ‘connect’ with the ‘landscape’ and land use systems producing particular qualities. Ghana is endowed with a diversity of tangible and intangible, bio-geo-physical and socio-cultural and traditional landscapes that have influenced the quality, reputation or other characteristic of several differentiated agricultural food products in specific areas giving them the potential to qualify for geographical indications (GI) labelling. However, this enormous potential has not been tapped - in the same way the EU gain billions of Euros per annum from agricultural origin food products registered with protected GI-s. The custodians of such potential GIs products therefore languish in abject poverty.

This paper presents preliminary results from VALOR – a research project investigating conditions under which Ghanaian origin food producers can add value by incorporating territory specific cultural, environmental and social qualities into marketing, production and processing of unique local, niche and specialty products.

Cases are investigated of the prospects for Ghana to leapfrog perhaps into exports of GI products, and certainly into allowing smallholder farmers to create employment and build monetary value, while stewarding local food cultures and natural environments and resources, and increasing the diversity of supply of natural and unique quality products and so contribute to enhanced food security.

‘Pona’ Yam from the Ghana Savannah Regions is one of the product cases investigated and provides for in-depth case study, as ‘landscape’ products incorporating ‘taste of place’. Framework conditions for producers creating or capturing market value as stewards of cultural and landscape values and environments and institutional requirements for such creation or capturing to happen, including presence of export opportunities, are discussed in this paper. A political ecology approach combined with the sustainable livelihoods framework provides guidance to the understanding and analysis of the research issues.

**Keywords:** Geographical indications, Ghana, Pona yam, smallholder farmers, unique qualities