



POTENTIAL FOR REGISTRATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATION: ART IN CIPOTANEA STRAW

**POTENCIALIDADE DE REGISTRO DE INDICAÇÃO
GEOGRÁFICA: A ARTE NA PALHA DE CIPOTÂNEA**

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Gilmar Cândido Rodrigues¹ | Fabrício Molica de Mendonça²
Paulo Henrique de Lima Siqueira³

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¹ Master in Intellectual Property and Technology Transfer for Innovation (UFSJ).
São João del Rei – MG, Brazil.
E-mail: gilmarcr@ufsj.edu.br

³ PhD in Administration (UFLA).
Professor at the Federal University of São João del-Rei.
São João del-Rei – MG, Brazil.
E-mail: paulosiqueira@ufsj.edu.br

² PhD in Production Engineering (UFRJ).
Professor at the Federal University of São João del-Rei.
São João del-Rei – MG, Brazil.
E-mail: fabriciomolica@ufsj.edu.br

ABSTRACT

Geographical Indication is a collective protection instrument that can promote regional development and preserve local traditions, providing benefits to both producers and the region, if there is an efficient structural arrangement. This study aimed to analyze the potential of the municipality of Cipotânea to be recognized as a Geographical Indication for corn straw handicrafts. To this end, a qualitative research was carried out, using the case study strategy. The survey of the necessary requirements to obtain the Geographical Indication registration was guided by the methodology adopted by SEBRAE, entitled “Guide for Diagnosis of a Potential Geographical Indication”, which consists of the application of a questionnaire with open questions that allowed the analysis of the reputation of the product and its association with the region, information about the territory, the representative entity and the actions of the institutions and producers, as well as the survey of local historical, cultural and socioeconomic characteristics. Regarding the results, although the region has a certain reputation, the supporting documents are insufficient to consolidate the characterization of the notoriety of the Cipotânea region linked to corn straw crafts, considering the quantitative and qualitative aspects of the sources. Furthermore, the diagnosis identified weaknesses in certain aspects, such as the scarcity of practices of associationism and cooperation among the artisans. However, elements were identified that may favor the implementation of a Collective Brand, whose feasibility study was suggested for future research.

Keywords: Keywords: Geographical Indication. Corn straw crafts. Cipotânea.

RESUMO

A Indicação Geográfica é um instrumento de proteção coletiva que pode promover o desenvolvimento regional além de preservar as tradições locais, conferindo benefícios tanto para produtores quanto para a região, desde que haja um arranjo estrutural eficiente. Este trabalho teve por finalidade analisar a potencialidade do município de Cipotânea para ser reconhecido como uma Indicação Geográfica para o artesanato em palha de milho. Para tanto, foi realizada uma pesquisa qualitativa, tendo como estratégia o estudo de caso. O levantamento dos requisitos necessários para a obtenção do registro de Indicação Geográfica norteou-se pela metodologia adotada pelo SEBRAE, intitulada “Guia para Diagnóstico de uma Potencial Indicação Geográfica”, que consiste na aplicação de um questionário com questões abertas que permitiram a análise da reputação do produto e sua associação com a região, das informações do território, da entidade representativa e das atuações das instituições e dos produtores bem como o levantamento das características históricas, culturais e socioeconômicas locais. Quanto aos resultados, ainda que a região apresente certa reputação, os documentos comprobatórios desvelam-se insuficientes para consolidar a caracterização da notoriedade da região de Cipotânea vinculada ao artesanato em palha de milho, considerando os aspectos quantitativo e qualitativo das fontes. Ademais, o diagnóstico identificou fragilidades em determinados aspectos como a exiguidade das práticas do associativismo e do cooperativismo entre as artesãs. No entanto, foram identificados elementos que podem favorecer a implementação de Marca Coletiva, cujo estudo da viabilidade foi sugerido para pesquisas futuras.

Palavras-chave: Geographical Indication. Handicraft in corn straw. Cipotânea.

INTRODUCTION

Geographical Indications (GIs) are distinctive signs used to identify products or services, whose reputation or characteristics are associated with their geographical origin, resulting from technical, social and economic interactions, including both the mobilization of specific local resources such as know-how, cultural traditions and natural resources in terms of building the product’s reputation in the marketing chains between producers and consumers (Medeiros; Passador, 2022). In Brazil, the legislation extends this protection to non-agricultural, mineral and artisanal (Cabral; Palomino, 2019).

By recognizing handicrafts as a potential GI, Brazilian legislation expands the country’s potential for more effective and efficient management of its intellectual property (França; Vigna, 2019). Because handicrafts are considered a symbol of a region’s local heritage and cultural identity, GI can contribute to enhancing the regional economy, protecting biodiversity, preserving traditional cultural expressions, and promoting visibility for handicraft creations and expanding their



commercialization through associative actions (Silva; Paixão, 2021). This enhances symbolic and intangible heritage and brings benefits to communities due to their traditional nature (Pellin, 2019).

Regarding the capacity of GI in artisanal production to impact local development, the literature has not yet reached a consensus. Studies carried out by Pagel and Carolino (2022), SEBRAE (2022) and Buss Júnior, Gonçalves and Schwanke (2016) demonstrated that, in general, by giving notoriety to the region, it was possible to value the place, attract tourists, increase the flow of products outwards and strengthen companies with an impact on the increase in jobs, income generation, emergence of new businesses and increased tax collection. Studies carried out by Silva *et al.* (2023), Rodrigues, Mendonça and Siqueira (2024) and Oliveira (2019) showed that GI, by itself, did not guarantee the benefits indicated by the literature.

In order to generate a positive impact, it is necessary to develop a plan involving all phases of structuring the GI, starting with the diagnosis of the region's potential, considering aspects such as a detailed analysis of the territory, the specificities of the product or service, local governance, the need for legal protection and the degree of engagement of the actors involved (Vieira *et al.*, 2019).

In this context, Cipotânea, in the state of Minas Gerais, stands out for its corn straw crafts. The municipality is a major producer of corn, whose straw is transformed into art by local artisans, which is distributed to the states of Minas Gerais, São Paulo, and Rio de Janeiro. Currently, this activity, in addition to being traditional and cultural, also represents the city's largest source of income (City Hall of Cipotânea, 2022). Recognition of the GI would contribute to valuing local products, preserving culture and tradition, and also to boosting the region's economic development. In view of the assumption, the following research question arose: what is the potential of the municipality of Cipotânea to be recognized as a Geographical Indication for corn straw crafts?

Seeking to resolve this question, this work aims to analyze the potential of the municipality of Cipotânea to be recognized as a Geographical Indication for corn straw crafts.

After this introductory section, in addition to the bibliographical references, this work is organized as follows: section 2 deals with the theoretical basis. The third section contains the methodological procedures for data collection. In turn, section 4 presents the results and discussions, followed by the final considerations.



THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATION AS A MECHANISM FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

GI can be defined as an intellectual property that grants exclusive rights of nature and collective use to producers linked to a specific location (Maiorki; Dallabrida, 2015). Following the success of European Union policies aimed at promoting the development of rural areas through the valorization of agri-food products with cultural identity, interest in the topic of protections has been aroused in Latin American countries, initiating discussions about GI as an inducer of regional development (Facirolli Sobrinho; Guedes; Castro, 2021).

In Brazil, GI is regulated by Law No. 9,279 of May 14, 1996, which divides it into two forms of protection: indication of origin (IP) and designation of origin (DO). IP refers to the geographic name of the territory that has become notorious or known as a center of extraction, production or manufacturing of a certain product or provision of a certain service. DO corresponds to the geographic name that designates products or services, whose qualities or characteristics can be attributed exclusively or essentially to the place of origin, including natural and human factors (Brazil, 1996).

GIs contribute to the socioeconomic and cultural promotion of the territory (Crescenzi *et al.*, 2022), especially in disadvantaged rural regions, as it guarantees a market for the product, encourages people to remain in their places of origin, and preserves the cultural memory of generations. In this regard, the benefits are distributed throughout the production chain, that is, from the producer of the raw material to the manufacturer, and also extend, indirectly, to other sectors of the economy such as tourism and gastronomy (Maiorki; Dallabrida, 2015). Consequently, biodiversity, regional knowledge, and natural resources are preserved (Bramley; Biénabe, 2013).

In this sense, GI production systems can provide economic sustainability by strengthening the production chain, diversifying products, distributing income and maintaining employment, among others; social sustainability through the cohesion of local actors, inclusion and local identity; and environmental sustainability through biodiversity, landscape and land use (Medeiros; Passador; Passador, 2016).

GIs benefit producers by providing competitive advantages in national and global markets by adding value to the originality of products. Greater confidence in the authenticity of certified products



makes consumers willing to pay a higher price for them, allowing traditional modes of production to persist in the context of monopolistic competition (Shafi, 2022).

For Cei, Defrancesco and Stefani (2018), Crescenzi *et al.* (2022) and Shafi (2022), the biggest beneficiaries of GIs are consumers, as they act as mechanisms for guaranteeing the quality and traceability of products, particularly when the source is emphasized. In a scenario of unfair competition, in which many producers misappropriate the unique characteristics of products originating from identity of origin, GIs provide protection against deceptive practices. In addition, labels of origin reduce the asymmetry of information, ensuring the originality and authenticity of products.

According to Pellin and Silva (2015), Shiki and Wilkinson (2016) and Vieira *et al.* (2019), there is a weakness in post-registration management mechanisms. Considering that the institutional support given to GIs is limited to granting registration, it is necessary to structure an institutional arrangement to efficiently articulate the various interested parties, fostering collective participation in discussions and strategic planning of the actions to be developed and, above all, having adequate governance to place collective interests above private ones.

GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATIONS AND CRAFTS

Craftsmanship is the legitimate expression of local culture represented in the work of the artisan, who, when producing their pieces with specific techniques, expresses their tacit knowledge accumulated from past generations (Castilho *et al.*, 2017), which makes it an expression of local identity and national cultural diversity (Buss Júnior; Gonçalves; Schwanke, 2016). This product comprises a cultural, social and economic activity. It is cultural because it is constructed, transmitted and modified over time, perpetuating the knowledge of a given society. It is social because it considers the social and family relationships that the activity provides. And it is economic because craftsmanship assumes a relevant role in local development projects and in reducing social inequalities through the generation of employment and income (Brandão, Silva; Fischer, 2013).

In this scenario, GI becomes essential to value this symbolic and intangible heritage, which is why Brazilian legislation allows the protection of handicrafts (Cabral; Palomino, 2019). GI points to quality and notoriety as distinctive factors of products, adding economic value and attributing reputation and



identity (Gollo; Castro, 2008). Therefore, in addition to protecting it, it can be seen as a tool to stimulate the economy of a community, protect biodiversity, preserve traditional cultural expressions, and promote cultural heritage (Covarrubia, 2019; Medeiros; Passador, 2022).

Some positive experiences involving artisanal production were recorded in the Indications of Origin (IP) of finished leather from Vale dos Sinos in the state of Rio Grande do Sul (SEBRAE, 2022), of clay pots from the Goiabeiras neighborhood in the city of Vitória, in Espírito Santo (Pagel; Carolino, 2022), and of the production of precious opals from Pedro II, in Piauí (Buss Júnior; Gonçalves; Schwanke, 2016). In these regions, by conferring notoriety, it was possible to attract tourists, increase the flow of products abroad and strengthen companies with an impact on increasing jobs, generating income and increasing tax collection.

However, studies carried out in the IPs of handicrafts in Capim Dourado, in the Jalapão Region, in Tocantins (Silva *et al.*, 2023), of handicraft pieces in tin, in São João del-Rei, in Minas Gerais (Rodrigues; Mendonça; Siqueira, 2024) and of filet embroidery, in the Lagoas Mundaú-Manguaba Region, in Alagoas (Oliveira, 2019), revealed that the GI has become a mere registration, not bringing solutions to the difficulties in associativism, inefficient management and low value of products in the market.

Although GIs are considered strategies to stimulate local and regional development, registration alone does not guarantee commercial success or territorial development (Medeiros; Terra; Passador, 2020). In order to generate a positive impact, it is essential to develop a plan involving all phases of structuring the GI, starting with the diagnosis of the region's potential, considering aspects such as a detailed analysis of the territory, the specificities of the product or service, local governance, the need for legal protection and the degree of engagement of the actors involved (Vieira *et al.*, 2019).

Among the diagnostic instruments, the methodology adopted by SEBRAE (2021) stands out, entitled *Guide for Diagnosing a Potential Geographical Indication – Consultant's Guide*. The diagnosis seeks to identify whether a given region has all the essential requirements to obtain GI registration, classifying them into IP and DO, and also analyzes the GI potential based on the criteria of product, territoriality, production method/production chain, governance, identity and sense of belonging, economic performance, need for protection, research involved and vision of the future (SEBRAE, 2021).

METHODOLOGY

TYPE OF RESEARCH DEVELOPED

This study adopts a qualitative approach, using non-standardized data collection methods to obtain the perspectives and points of view of participants, as well as to analyze the interactions between individuals, groups, and communities (Sampieri; Collado; Lucio, 2013). From the point of view of its objectives, the research was: descriptive, as it seeks to detail the characteristics of a given population or phenomenon, or to establish relationships between variables; and explanatory, because it is dedicated to identifying the factors that determine or contribute to the occurrence of phenomena (Gil, 2008). The research strategy adopted was the case study, considering the need for continuous interaction between the theoretical issues studied and the data and information collected from the actors involved in the corn straw crafts of Cipotânea. According to Yin (2001), a case study corresponds to an empirical investigation of a contemporary phenomenon inserted in the context of real life, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are not clearly defined.

DATA COLLECTION

Data collection was carried out using the following techniques: a) bibliographic research; b) documentary research; and c) structured interview, with open and standardized questions, developed from a fixed wording of questions, whose order and wording remain invariable for all interviewees to allow comparison of responses and reflect differences between respondents (Gil, 2008; Silva; Quintella, 2021).

On-site visits were carried out between February and April 2023, to places such as: Cipotânea Municipal Library, City Hall, Cipotânea Cultural Center and Museum, Cipotânea Family Farmers Association, EMATER-MG Local Office and Regional Development Agency of the Nascente do Rio Doce Tourist Circuit.

METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURE

The application of structured interviews was guided by the methodology adopted by SEBRAE (2021) entitled *Guide for Diagnosing a Potential Geographical Indication – Consultant’s Guide*, used to identify whether a given region has all the requirements to obtain GI registration and list the challenges and opportunities.



The diagnosis consisted of analyzing the responses to a questionnaire with 35 open questions, divided into two groups: critical and structural (Table 1). The critical questions aim to verify the real feasibility of the region linked to a specific product being recognized or not with a GI in the IP and/ or DO species. The structural questions allow a more in-depth analysis of the region’s potential to be recognized as a GI (SEBRAE, 2021).

Table 1 | SEQ Quadro * ARABIC – Criteria for diagnosing GI potential according to SEBRAE methodology

Critical Questions	Structural Issues
	Product
	Territoriality
	Production method/Production chain
	Governance
IP Potential	Identity and sense of belonging
DO potential	Economic performance
	Need for protection
	Research involved
	Vision of the future

Source: prepared by the authors (2023).

For each criterion, scores were assigned on a scale from 0 to 5, with 0 not meeting the criterion and 5 fully meeting it. The scores given to each criterion resulted from the analysis of the responses obtained by the interviewees, complemented by the analysis of the case study and guided by the SEBRAE methodology (2021).

The interview was conducted with eight people, with the target audience being artisans who had extensive knowledge of the handicraft production chain in the Cipotânea region and the history of the region linked to the product. The determination of the number of interviewees followed the recommendation of the SEBRAE Guide (2021), considering that this study, due to its qualitative approach, did not intend to survey a significant sample of the population to obtain statistical generalizations. The aim, through the criteria of the aforementioned Guide, was to capture detailed and in-depth information regarding the individual contexts of each interviewee, their experiences and perceptions about the phenomenon studied. Regarding the number of interviewees, Minayo (2014) emphasizes that qualitative research is not based on the numerical

criterion to ensure its representativeness, and that social individuals who have a more significant connection to the problem to be investigated should be considered. The subjects were chosen through a non-probabilistic and convenience sampling process. This technique is applied in qualitative studies without a high level of precision (Gil, 2008). In convenience sampling, the researcher selects the most accessible subjects, in addition to cooperators, and may employ, in focus groups, preliminary test questionnaires or pilot studies, in order to generate ideas, intuitions or hypotheses (Malhotra, 2012).

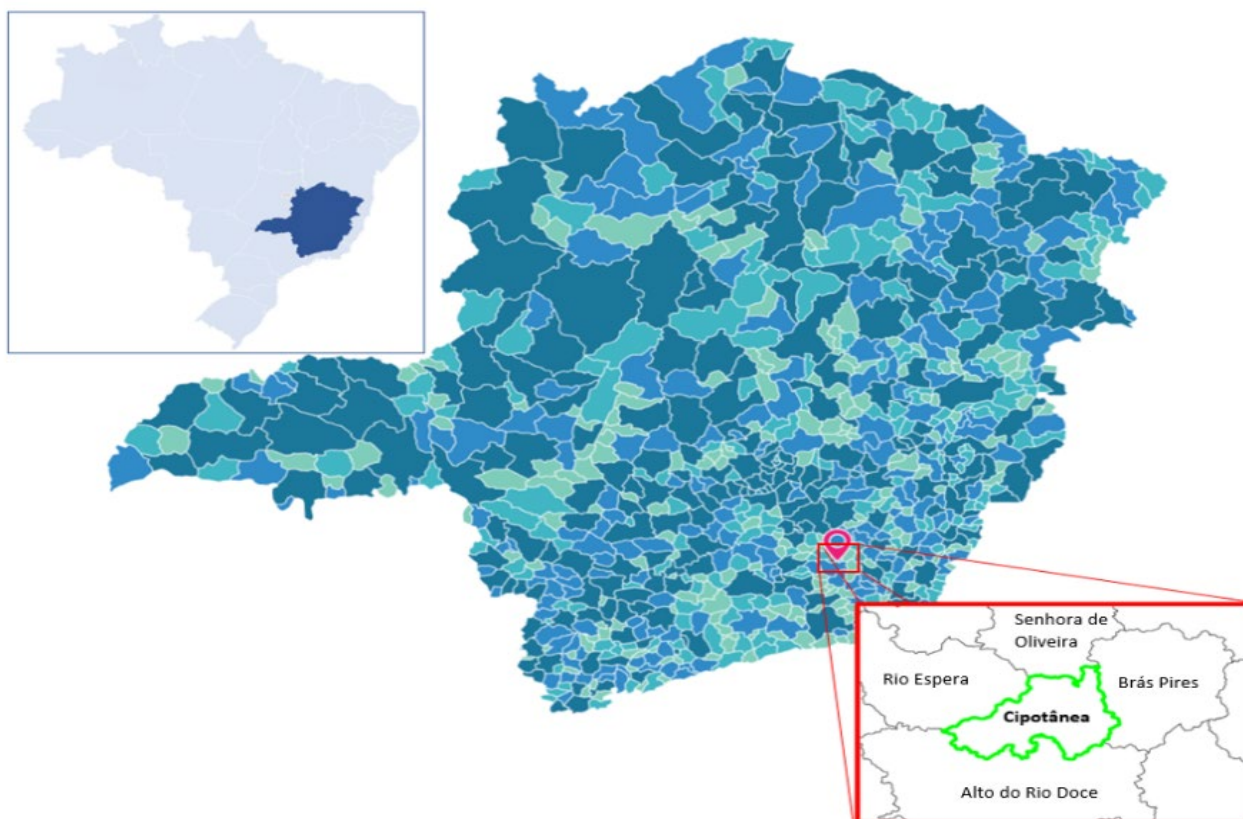
The interviews were conducted during the month of February 2023, after submission and approval by the Research Ethics Committee (CEP) of the Federal University of São João del -Rei, ratified by the Consolidated Opinion of the CEP No. 5,743,545, CAAE: 64295322.2.0000.5151, issued on November 7, 2022. The interviewees signed the Free and Informed Consent Form (TCLE). The interviews were recorded and the responses were transcribed.

DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY AREA

The study area comprises the municipality of Cipotânea. With an area of 153,479 km² the municipality is located in Minas Gerais, in the Zona da Mata region and in the Viçosa Microregion, bordering the following municipalities: Senhora de Oliveira, Rio Espera, Alto do Rio Doce, and Brás Pires (Figure 1). The city is 239 km from the capital of Minas Gerais, Belo Horizonte, and its main access highways are BR-040, BR-265, and MG-132. According to the 2022 census, it has 5,581 inhabitants, of which the majority, 54%, live in rural areas (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics – IBGE, 2022).



Figure 1 | Location of the municipality of Cipotânea



Source: prepared by the authors based on IBGE (2022).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

ART IN CIPOTÂNEA STRAW

Cipotânea stands out in agriculture with the planting of corn. However, the importance of cultivation is not limited to the use of grain, but to the use of straw that is transformed into art by the hands of local artisans. It is estimated that 1,600 people are directly involved in craft work, being the main source of income for at least 30% of the population. The presence of crafts is significant, with a production of around 52 thousand pieces per month, resulting in R\$ 3 million in annual revenue, according to the last survey carried out by EMATER in 2006 (Carvalho, 2006).

On several streets of the small town, it is possible to see products exposed to the sun to dry, and it is also common to find artisans weaving in the streets, in front of their houses, reflecting the notoriety of the craft and its importance to the municipality. This demonstrates the territory as a provider of natural resources and holder of environmental factors of production, as evidenced in

Crescenzi 's work. *et al.* (2022).

Regarding the historical dimension of production, it can be inferred that basketry was learned from catechized indigenous groups and remnants of tribes that occupied the lands where the city was founded at the end of the 18th century. The craft gained greater prominence in the 1960s, driven by the actions of the city's parish priest at the time, Father José Geraldo das Mercês, who encouraged the activity in his Sunday sermons. The then councilman Pedro Rodrigues Pereira was also an important figure in boosting the activity, since he bought the artifacts and resold them outside the municipality, encouraging more women to dedicate themselves to crafts (Carvalho, 1997). From then on, the craft gained strength and relevance, with traditional weaving and braiding techniques being transmitted through practical and oral teachings from one generation to the next. The tradition still reverberates through the Corn Festival, one of the city's great cultural events that has been taking place for 40 years, attracting tourists to the city and contributing to the promotion, exhibition and commercialization of handicrafts.

The corn straw crafts (Figure 2) of Cipotânea express, in their products, the local culture and tradition, associating, according to Medeiros and Passador (2022), the quality criteria and standards with the geographical environment. In this sense, the activity not only intertwines the corn straws, but also the history of the city, associating economic needs with social and environmental aspects, and preserving the core of the craftsmanship: making art with one's own hands. The craftswomen use traditional weaving and braiding techniques passed down from generation to generation. Each craftswoman produces her own crafts, creating varied patterns and textures according to her talent and creativity, and giving uniqueness to each piece.



Figure 2 | Some examples of the variety of artisanal artifacts made from corn straw from Cipotânea



Source: authors' collection (2023).

There is a wide variety of products, in different sizes and shapes, meeting the most varied needs, such as: utilities – baskets, bags, trunks, coasters, bottle holders, boxes and trays –; decoration – arrangements, flowers, wall decorations, garlands, vases, curtains, rugs and lamps –; fashion – hats, shoes, bags and accessories –, in addition to many other forms, the limit of which is the imagination of the artisans.

DIAGNOSIS OF THE POTENTIAL FOR GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATION

To diagnose the potential for geographical indication of corn straw handicrafts in the Cipotânea region, the SEBRAE *Guide for Diagnosing a Potential Geographical Indication – Consultant's Guide* was used. This guide was developed in 2013 and has undergone several updates, the last of which was completed in 2021. The process includes an analysis of the geographic, cultural and socioeconomic characteristics of the region and how they relate to the handicraft in question. It also allows us to identify aspects such as the reputation of the product and its association with the region, as well as information about the territory, the product or service, the representative entity and the actions of the institutions and producers.

Table 2 presents a summary of the diagnosis carried out in the region, also listing the score attributed to each criterion, according to the reports obtained from the respondents, the field research carried out in the municipality. and guided by the SEBRAE methodology.

Table 2 | Summary of diagnosis and evaluation of criteria

Geographical Name		Cipotanea
UF		Minas Gerais
Possible Substitute	Procedural	Association of Family Farmers of Cipotânea
Criterion	Diagnosis summary	Scoring
GI Modality	25 pieces of evidence were found that mention the product and geographical name under study, which may indicate the potential for recognition in the indication of origin modality, but in principle they appear to be insufficient with regard to the criteria of quality and quantity of sources.	3
Product	<p>Corn straw crafts. Historical accounts indicate that basket weaving was learned from indigenous groups who were catechized and from the remnants of tribes that occupied the lands where the city was founded in the late 18th century. From 1938 onwards, the activity was encouraged as an opportunity for women to make baskets to help them cope with the poverty in the region. The crafts gained greater prominence in the 1960s with the increase in sales and the creation of new models.</p> <p>Craftsmanship is recognized for its use of traditional techniques, typicality, sustainability and wide variety of products.</p> <p>The activity complies with legal regulations.</p>	3
Territoriality	Artisanal production is present and spread throughout the municipality, whether in urban or rural areas. The historical, social and productive base corresponds only to the Cipotânea region, thus implying that the delimited area corresponds to the homonymous political-administrative area.	3
Production method/ Production chain	<p>The production chain is short, consisting of six stages (corn cultivation, raw material management, production of wooden molds and frames, production of handicrafts and marketing).</p> <p>The increase in demand for corn straw has led to an increase in the price of the raw material and made it difficult to obtain, subjecting artisans to precarious conditions and improvisation in the search for solutions.</p> <p>The weaving technique is hereditary, passed down from generation to generation. The products stand out due to the skill of the artisans and the techniques used, which are imbued with sociocultural values.</p> <p>Production is pulverized, and quality control is carried out individually, except for those carried out under the control of the Association.</p> <p>Marketing is a weak element in the production chain considering the direct relationship with middlemen, who take advantage of the needs, lack of knowledge and lack of capital of families and negotiate products at a lower price.</p> <p>Currently, the activity is supported by the City Hall of Cipotânea. In the past, it has received support from EMATER-MG, Embrapa Milho e Sorgo and institutions such as Central de Mão de Minas and the Instituto Centro de Capacitação e Apoio Empreendedor.</p>	2



Governance	<p>There is only one representative organization: The Association of Family Farmers of Cipotânea.</p> <p>The Association's work has already had positive effects on the activity, but the association's existence did not last over time. Today, the Association has a small number of members and its financial situation is critical. Individual and informal sales predominate in the city, with distrust and competition among the artisans.</p> <p>There is a good relationship between the artisans, but there needs to be greater dialogue and interaction between them, aiming to rescue and sustain the associations</p>	2
Identity and sense of belonging	<p>Production is driven by values that emphasize the continuity of the activity as a way of preserving and transmitting traditions and knowledge that have developed over generations connected to the history and culture of the region.</p> <p>In general, there is also recognition among the population regarding crafts given their historical and economic importance.</p> <p>A major driver of activity is the Corn Festival event, which has been taking place for 40 years.</p>	4
Economic performance	<p>It is estimated that 1,600 people are directly involved in crafts, which are the main source of income for at least 30% of the population. The production volume is around 52,000 pieces per month, resulting in R\$3 million in annual revenue. The data was collected by EMATER in a study carried out in 2006, and there is no more up-to-date information, considering the high level of informality in the sector.</p> <p>Craftswomen need training from a management point of view.</p>	3
Need for protection	<p>There is no evidence of counterfeiting, unfair acts or usurpation of the name Cipotânea in relation to corn straw crafts.</p> <p>Although there is a wide variety of artifacts, some similar products are produced in several other places, whether with cultural heritage or not. Thus, there is a need for protection that allows the products of Cipotânea to be distinguished from similar products available on the market based on the intrinsic historical-cultural elements involved in the city's artisanal expressions.</p>	2
Research involved	<p>This criterion was not evaluated, as it tends to identify whether there are soil and climate conditions in the region and human factors that influence the characteristics and quality of the product, thus focusing on a potential geographical indication in the form of designation of origin.</p> <p>However, there are other technical studies carried out by Embrapa Milho e Sorgo in partnership with EMATER-MG, aiming to improve the quality of straw to enhance craftsmanship.</p>	-
Vision of the future	<p>The artisans expect that, by increasing the value of their products, they will be able to reach new markets. They hope that the activity can grow and boost the development of the city. They also hope that the increase in value can contribute to the continuity of the activity for future generations.</p>	3

Source: research data (2023).



Considering the information gathered as well as the perceptions found during the interviews and field research, it was understood that, at this moment, the Cipotânea region does not have a perspective that supports a GI process. If we look at Figure 3, we can see that there were no notes that excluded this possibility, but, at the same time, the result demonstrates a certain fragility in certain aspects.

The first point refers to the need to prove the recognition of Cipotânea linked to corn straw crafts. According to current legislation, the Indication of Origin modality is mainly based on notoriety, requiring conclusive evidence that proves that the geographical name has become known as a production center for a given product (Brazil, 1996). According to the National Institute of Industrial Property (INPI), it is crucial to balance the quantity and quality of documents so that the greater the strength of the evidence, the smaller the number of documents required to prove notoriety (Rodrigues, 2023). In this scenario, considering that little evidence of great impact was found, such as mentions in vehicles with large national circulation, it is assumed that it would be essential to obtain a greater number of documents to characterize the notoriety of the region.

Figure 3 | Assessment of the GI potential criteria for the Cipotânea region



Source: research data (2023).

Another critical aspect concerns the governance of the Association of Family Farmers of Cipotânea. In the case of a collective right, the mere existence of an organization as a procedural substitute for the application of a GI is not enough. The Association, as a representative of the community, is responsible for the role of articulation, management and monitoring of the GI, as pointed out by Medeiros, Terra and Passador (2020).

In the case of Cipotânea, the success achieved by the Association at the beginning of its activities was not consolidated enough to remain strong over time, confirming the lack of a culture of associationism and cooperation among artisans. Without a strong collective base, the Association's financial situation is worsening, making it difficult to even pay basic bills. Although GIs are tools that can contribute to the socioeconomic and cultural promotion of the region, the economic return is not immediate, in addition to there being a high financial cost for recognition and maintenance, as Giovannucci points out. *et al.*, (2009) and Shiki and Wilkinson (2016).

Without a consolidated association, distrust and competition prevail among artisans, favoring unfair trade practiced by middlemen and accentuating the precariousness of the region. Therefore, marketing is another link that must be improved. It is necessary to foster an environment of greater trust and cooperation and, furthermore, to internalize the fact that marketing should not be based on price, but rather on the intrinsic value of the product, which has a cultural and historical basis. Artisans must be aware that it is possible to reconcile the intrinsic value of crafts with a fair and accessible price, which considers both their efforts and the ability of the interested public to pay.

Encouraging associations and cooperatives will be essential to improve product marketing, as stated by Cabral and Palomino (2019). In the case studied, the union of artisans through the Association will allow joint negotiation with intermediaries, thus increasing bargaining power, since middlemen will have difficulty imposing unfavorable conditions on an organized group. Also through the collective movement, it will be possible to seek new markets and forms of marketing, thus reducing dependence on middlemen. Therefore, this can result in a more balanced and fair relationship between artisans and intermediaries, with a reduction in power asymmetries and an increase in the possibilities of mutual gain.

While the need to generate income through crafts is evident, there is a confluence between subsistence and art. Production is driven by values that emphasize continuity to preserve and transmit traditions and knowledge that have developed over generations, connected to the history and culture of the region. Craftswomen see their work as a unique expression of their skills and perspectives, and they also see themselves as part of a community of creators who share similar values and practices and feel connected to a broader history of craft production that goes back generations.

Thus, there is a local vocation in the region for artisanal activity that develops diversified, sustainable, high-quality products that are, above all, full of traditional identity, and it is necessary to adopt measures to preserve and protect this know-how that has been passed down from generation to generation. Considering that there is a cluster of artisans located in the same region, who manufacture and sell products in common and that denote quality, there are, in principle, elements that could favor the implementation of a Collective Brand, which could be used to strengthen the cluster as a whole and, in the near future, seek recognition of a strong GI.

According to Faria and Vasconcellos (2021), apparently, GIs, Certification Marks and Collective Marks are the intellectual property tools best adapted to the protection of practices related to crafts and the concepts of collectivity and collective rights. From Porto's (2012) perspective, obtaining a collective mark is simpler than other IP tools, since it is enough to have internal regulations for its use.

The region's productive vocation is well-known, and its activity has been developed for over 80 years. The skill of the artisans, combined with the use of traditional techniques, gives life to a diversity of quality products with cultural heritage. Thus, the opportunity to obtain a collective brand can add value to the products and favor the conquest of new markets.

Considering the economic importance of the artisanal activity for the municipality, it was observed through the interviews that the artisans expected the need to value their products, so that it would be possible to reach new markets at regional and national levels, in order to guarantee a fairer and more stable source of income and, mainly, that allows the continuity of this practice by new generations as a way of preserving traditions.



However, regardless of the protection mechanism to be implemented, it will be essential to coordinate the formation of a network of development agents who can, through their specific lines of action, assist the group of artisans by providing training and education, as evidenced by Alcalde, Bourlegat and Castilho (2007). Support is essential to leverage artisanal activity, promote the autonomy of artisans, stimulate associations and cooperatives and provide internalization and awareness among artisans regarding the potential and latent value of corn straw crafts produced in the city, considering their cultural, historical and socioeconomic values.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This study aimed to analyze the potential of the municipality of Cipotânea to be recognized as a Geographical Indication for corn straw handicrafts. To this end, a qualitative approach was developed, adopting the case study strategy for the collection and analysis of information. Through the application of the SEBRAE (2022) methodology entitled *Guide for Diagnosis of a Potential Geographical Indication*, it was possible to analyze the feasibility of obtaining GI registration for the Cipotânea region. This methodology, complemented by the case study, allowed a more in-depth analysis of the region's potential to be recognized as a GI, identifying aspects related to the reputation of the handicrafts and its association with the region, information about the territory, the representative entity, in addition to the actions of institutions and artisans.

In researching the history and tradition of corn straw crafts in Cipotânea, it was possible to identify that the craft activity in the municipality is not only traditional, but also expressive. Crafts are produced by many people and throughout the city, both in urban and rural areas. When walking through the streets of Cipotânea, it is possible to see various artifacts drying in the sun, as well as find artisans weaving their products in front of their homes, highlighting the importance of the activity for the municipality. The activity which dates back to the origins of the city was encouraged as income opportunity for women address the state of poverty in the region, gaining prominence over time with the increase in commercialization and the creation of new models. In this way, crafts are recognized for the use of traditional techniques, typicality, sustainability and a wide variety of products.



Regarding the exploration of the region's notoriety in relation to corn straw crafts, it was noted that the activity has recognition and reputation to a certain extent. In addition to participation in several fairs within and outside the State, some evidence was found from mentions in books, scientific articles, reports in magazines, newspapers and *websites* of different circulation areas, as well as photos from private collections. However, it is important to balance the quantity and quality of supporting documents so that the greater the strength of the evidence, the smaller the number of documents needed to prove the region's notoriety. Taking into account that a small number of evidence with great impact was found, such as mentions in vehicles with large national circulation, it is assumed that it would be essential to obtain a more expressive number of supporting sources to consolidate the characterization of the region's notoriety.

As production is spread throughout the municipality, marketing has become a weak point in the production chain, given the direct relationship between producers and middlemen, who take advantage of the artisans' needs, lack of knowledge and lack of capital to sell products at very low prices.

Governance also emerged as a weak point. Although the Association of Family Farmers of Cipotânea has existed for over 20 years, its financial situation is currently worsening, as a result of the limited cooperative practices among the artisans. Without a consolidated association, distrust and competition prevail, favoring unfair trade by middlemen and accentuating the precariousness of the region. It was identified that the movement that gave rise to the Association was exogenous, stimulated by organizations such as the Minas Gerais Technical Assistance Company (EMATER-MG). Thus, there was a need for greater dialogue and interaction among the artisans in order to develop well-articulated endogenous activities in order to rescue and sustain the association in favor of the community.

It was found that, in Cipotânea, corn straw crafts are predominantly characterized by small, individualized and pulverized family production, direct marketing and, mainly, informality, which makes it difficult to obtain more up-to-date economic or trade statistics related to the activity. The last study carried out in the region was done in 2006, showing that crafts for the municipality represented the main source of income for at least 30% of the population.



Regarding the potential of the municipality of Cipotânea to be recognized as a GI, it is concluded that, at the moment, the region does not have a perspective that supports a recognition process, emphasizing, however, that the result of the diagnosis does not exclude this possibility. Even if the representative entity produces greater robustness in relation to the quantity of sources proving the notoriety of the region to support the request for recognition, the weaknesses identified in this research need to be mitigated so that a possible GI reaches its potential, contributing to local development.

However, it is categorical that there is a production system and a local vocation for artisanal activity in the region, which results in diversified, sustainable, high-quality products imbued with traditional identity, whose preservation and protection of this knowledge is a must. In this sense, the study pointed out the possibility of searching for another protection and promotion mechanism, the Collective Brand, given the existence of elements that could favor the implementation of this and another distinctive sign of industrial property, although without conclusive results as it is not part of the scope of this research.

Despite the limitations of the research, it was impossible to generalize the results, considering the number of interviewees, which was determined through non-probabilistic convenience sampling, and a thorough investigation was not carried out on the feasibility of implementing the Collective Brand for corn straw crafts from Cipotânea. These limitations serve as suggestions for future work.



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