



PRESS RELEASE

Cameroon's 'Poivre de Penja' registered in the European Union as the first protected geographical indication from the African Intellectual Property Organisation region

Yaoundé, Cameroon, 17 March 2022

The European Commission has today announced the registration in the European Union (EU) of Cameroon's 'Poivre de Penja' as the first protected geographical indication (PGI) from the African Intellectual Property Organization (OAPI) region, and the second from Africa.

This announcement, published in the Official Journal of the EU, comes at the end of an application process, during which the EU-funded **African Intellectual Property Rights and Innovation Project (AfrIPI)**, in cooperation with **OAPI**, supported the Poivre de Penja Producers Association to fulfil the conditions required to obtain European recognition.

Poivre de Penja is a tropical peppercorn renowned for its unique seasoning qualities and lingering flavours. Whether green, white, red or black, it is considered one of the best and most highly regarded peppercorns in global cuisine. Poivre de Penja is cultivated on the volcanic slopes of the Mount Kupe in the Penja municipality of the Littoral Region of Cameroon since the 1950s. Its cultivation is a principal activity of local farmers, who apply traditional methods. In 2013, Poivre de Penja received its first registration by OAPI, making it a pioneer in the OAPI region, which is made of 17 countries.

Through the announcement of this registration, the EU recognises that Poivre de Penja has a specific geographical origin and possesses particular qualities due to this unique origin. Therefore, the registration guarantees the protection of the rights of the members of the local producers' association to be exclusively entitled to use the name Poivre de Penja. This will prevent abuse of the quality image of their unique product and unfair competition from other producers that do not conform to the applicable EU standards.

Furthermore, the recognition is expected to foster the production and marketing of Poivre de Penja and boost its market value. It opens wider avenues for increased commercialisation of Poivre de Penja on the EU market with accrued benefits for local farmers and for Cameroon's economy as a whole.



'In our global economy that increasingly places high value on the role of intellectual property in international trade, the Penja pepper story is another bold illustration of the potential of African products to compete in the global market using protected geographical indications to certify their unique origin, quality and production methods', said Philippe Van Damme, the EU Ambassador to Cameroon.

At the beginning of its five-year mandate in 2020, the AfrIPI project provided legal and financial support in the filing of the application for this registration. The AfrIPI, which is funded by the European Commission and implemented by the European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO), is the EU's first intellectual property-related action in Africa. Its objective is to facilitate intra-African trade and African and European investment, with an aim to create, protect, utilise, administer, and enforce intellectual property rights across Africa in line with international best practices and in support of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), the African Union's (AU) Agenda 2063 and the AU Continental Strategy on Geographical Indications. Geographical indications count among the deliverables of the AU-EU Rural Transformation Agenda, endorsed by the European and African ministers of agriculture in the AU-EU Ministerial Conference of 2019.

Producers of Poivre de Penja have also benefitted from the support of other European actors, such as the French Development Agency (AFP) and COLEACP.

More information:

- [EU Official Journal announcement](#)
- [Manual for Geographical Indications in Africa](#)
- EU Geographical Indication Requirements: [European regulation on quality schemes for agricultural products and foodstuffs](#)
- EU Delegation in Cameroon: https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/cameroon_en
- OAPI: www.oapi.int
- AfrIPI: www.afripi.org
- EUIPO: www.euipo.europa.eu