



CAMEROON GENDER AND ENVIRONMENT WATCH (CAMGEW)

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OKU WHITE HONEY CERTIFIED AS GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATION PRODUCT

GENERAL INTRODUCTION OF CAMGEW

Cameroon Gender and Environment Watch (CAMGEW) is a nonprofit created in October 2007 with authorisation number N° 000998/RDA/JO6/BAPP to work locally and think globally, integrating gender issues in solving environmental and social problems in Cameroon. CAMGEW believes that the future of our mother planet-earth is in our hands (men and women, young and old) and also that the planet can be sustained by putting social and environmental justice at the centre of development using a participatory approach. CAMGEW seeks to achieve her objectives by liaising with other like-minded organisations worldwide. CAMGEW has as vision “Changing lives of women, children and communities while protecting the environment and as mission to fight poverty; promote sound environmental management, gender balance and economic sustainable development.

CAMGEW is working in the Kikum-Ijim forest where the Oku White Honey is produced. She trains bee farmers on apiculture, promote the regeneration of this forest with native bee loving trees and organise bee farmers producing this honey into cooperatives.

CAMGEW has trained 572 bee farmers and donated 517 beehives to them. CAMGEW has also planted 44000 native bee loving trees in the Kikum-Ijim forest and organized bee farmers into 5 Oku White Honey Cooperatives. Here are the names of cooperatives

Existing Oku White Honey Cooperative

-Oku Honey Cooperative-Oku

Newly created Oku White Honey Cooperatives (Informal Not legalised yet)

These cooperatives include: Njinikom Oku White Honey Cooperative, Belo Oku White Honey Cooperative, Bikov Oku White Honey Cooperative, Abasakom Oku White Honey Cooperative and Atumikui Oku White Honey Cooperative. These cooperatives have not yet been legalized. This has been done by CAMGEW under the Man & Nature – France project funded by French Development Agency. Bee farming trainings and forest regeneration was done by CAMGEW with funds from French IUCN (PPI-FFEM).

GENERAL NOTION ABOUT GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATION

The issue of geographical indications (GIs) has been around for many years and has long been the subject of heated debate in a number of international gatherings. The first section of this paper provides a brief definition of a GI as well as the delimitation zone of Kilum-Ijim forest and some of the historical background to the issue and Oku White Honey as a Geographical Indication (GI). Some protection has been offered for GIs in the context of the intellectual property regime under the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO). There are a number of different definitions of a geographical indication but for the purposes of this paper a GI is defined as “a designation which identifies certain qualities or other characteristics or the reputation of a particular product to a specific geographical locality”. More so, geographical indication (GI) is a sign used on products that have a specific geographical origin and possess qualities or a reputation that are due to that origin. As a result, the originality of Oku White Honey depends on the unique ecosystem of the forest in which it is made. This forest harbor plants that when pollinated by the bees result in honey that yields unique characteristics.

DELIMITATTON OF KILUM –IJIM FOREST

The Kilum-Ijim forest is found in the North West Region of Cameroon and is the largest remaining montane forest covering an area of 20,000 hectares and is located on Mount Kilum (3011m) and adjoining Ijim Ridge (2000-2500m) which is recognized globally for its endemism. The Kilum range (also known as Mount Oku) is situated in Bui Administrative Division in the North West Region. The Ijim Ridge stretches northwest from Mount Oku, starting from the west side of Lake Oku to

Kom in Boyo Division. The contiguous Kilum and Ijim Mountain Forest are located between latitude 6°0TN and 6°1TN and Longitude 10°20'E and 10°35'E.

CASE STUDY: OKU WHITE HONEY

The originality of Oku White Honey depends on the unique ecosystem of the forest in which it is produced. In general, there are two ways in which honey is procured: harvesting it from wild bees or using the science of domesticating bees, which is known as apiculture (according to the Food and Agriculture Organization). It should be noted that bees in Kilum forest are gotten from the outskirts of Oku. They are gotten from the valleys like Mbam, Tadu, Njotin, etc distances of approximately 15 Kilometres from Oku. Colonised beehives are carried to the Kilum forest where Oku White Honey is produced.

Historical Background of Geographical Indications

Some of the world's most famous products owe their success to the region they are produced. Whether it is tequila from Mexico, Italian parmigiana cheese, or Colombian coffee, the unique geographical features of where these products are produced results in their equally unique qualities. Geographical Indications (GIs) are a form of intellectual property (IP) right that protects such products, and they have helped spur economic development. While Africa is endowed with some of the richest ecosystems in the world GIs in the continent have yet to take off. However, with the help of the African Intellectual Property Organization (OAPI), a small number of products from various African countries have been registered as GIs as a way to increase market reach and expand the livelihood of producers. One of the first three products is Oku White Honey from the Republic of Cameroon (Cameroon), which is produced in the nationally protected forest of Kilum-Ijim. As one of Cameroon's first registered GIs, producers and cooperatives involved in the production of Oku White Honey are hoping that their product can eventually compete on an international level with the likes of other well-known GIs and spur economic development. Another GI product in Cameroon is the Penja White Pepper. Note should be taken that, Geographical indications are typically used for agricultural products, foodstuffs, wine and spirit drinks, handicrafts, and industrial products.

How are geographical indications Products protected?

There are three main ways to protect a Geographical Indication product:

- so-called sui generis systems (i.e. special regimes of protection);
- using collective or certification marks; and
- Methods focusing on business practices, including administrative product approval schemes.

These approaches involve differences with respect to important questions, such as the conditions for protection or the scope of protection. On the other hand, two of the modes of protection — namely sui generis systems and collective or certification mark systems — share some common features, such as the fact that they set up rights for collective use by those who comply with defined standards. Broadly speaking geographical indications are protected in different countries and regional systems through a wide variety of approaches and often using a combination of two or more of the approaches outlined above. These approaches have been developed in accordance with different legal traditions and within a framework of individual historical and economic conditions.

FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE THE UNIQUENESS OF OKU WHITE HONEY

Varieties of Different Flora and Fauna in Kilum-Ijim Forest

Kilum-Ijim is endowed with multiple and diverse flora ranging from herbs, shrubs and trees. This flora produces multi-coloured flowers with different flavours. Moreover, since bees play a double role in plants and human beings unconsciously, i.e. in plant pollination and extraction of nectar, and pollen grains that is then converted into honey and combs. Some of these shrubs that produces varieties of flowers are *Kniphofia reflexa* (Asphodelaceae), *plectranthus punctatus* subsp, *lanatus* (labiateae), *Gladiolus* sp. Nov.(Iridaceae), *Eriocaulon asteroides* (Eriocaulaceae), *Eriocaulon parvulum* (Eriocaulaceae), *Dombeya ledermannii* (Sterculiaceae), *Oncoba* sp. Nov.(Flacourtiaceae), *Caterostigma* (Scrophulariaceae), *Helichrysum cameroonense* (compositae) *Dipsacus narcisseaanum* (Dipsacaceae).

In addition, trees species available in Kilum Ijim forest that contribute enormously in honey production when they flowers are: *Schefflera abyssinica*, *Schefflera manni*, *Maesa Lanceolata*, *Solanecio Mannii*, *Prunus africana*, *Newtonia Camerunensis*, *Bridelia Speciosa*, *Pittosporium Mannii*, *Zysiguim Staundti*, *Albizia Gummefera*, *Croton Macrotatchyst*.

The Altitude of Kilum –Ijim Mountain

Kilum-Ijim forest is located in the North West region of Cameroon and surrounded by three tribes: Oku, Nso and Kom. Its delimitation zone cuts across Liakom and

Fundong in Kom 6061, Oku 10017'04 and Vekovi-jakiri in Nso 6014'59 to 10026'02. Rising up to 2,000 meters above sea level, with an attitude of a mountainous zone of 1600m and 3011m, the Kilum-Ijim forest is a rich, diverse ecosystem covering over 20,000 hectares. With over 150 melliferous plant species which is collected by bees and turned into honey, the amount of rainfall, sunlight, temperature, altitude, and soil quality in the Kilum Ijim forest all serve to influence the end product- oku white honey.

Two plants yield white flowers in the forest namely; *schefflera abyssinica*, *Schefflera manni* and *nuxia congesta* and in combination with the environment help give Oku white honey its unique properties,

Properties of Oku White Honey and Bee species:

The species of bees available in Kilum-IJim forest that produce this remarkable honey is called *Apis midlifera adansoni*. Oku White Honey Colour content is 9-17mm. Taste quality of Oku White Honey is flavoured flowery. Texture content is creamy white and lightly granular. Moisture content is between 18% and 20%. All these qualities make Oku White Honey unique and beyond compared.

The Unique Qualities of Oku White Honey

In order to function as a GI, a sign must identify a product as originating in a given place. In addition, the qualities, characteristics or reputation of the product should be essentially due to the place of origin. Since the qualities depend on the geographical place of production, there is a clear link between the product and its original place of production. A geographical indication right enables those who have the right to use the indication to prevent its use by a third party whose product does not conform to the applicable standards. For example, in the jurisdictions in which the Darjeeling geographical indication is protected, producers of Darjeeling tea can exclude use of the term "Darjeeling" for tea not grown in their tea gardens or not produced according to the standards set out in the code of practice for the geographical indication. However, a protected geographical indication does not enable the holder to prevent someone from making a product using the same techniques as those set out in the standards for that indication. Protection for a geographical indication is usually obtained by acquiring a right over the sign that constitutes the indication.

THE CERTIFICATION OF OKU WHITE HONEY AS A GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATION PRODUCT

The Kilum/Ijim White Honey Association (KIWHA) is the umbrella organization created in March 29th, 2011 and registered under authorized No.122/AR/E26/PS/188 in conformity with Law No.90/053 of 19/12/90 relating to freedom of Association in Cameroon.

The above association is therefore charged with the control of the production of white honey, transportation and marketing of honey and some honey products around the delimitation zone of Kilum/Ijim forest.

Geographical indication of the Oku white honey: the G.I refers to the certification of the Oku white honey under certification № 003 of 22/07/2013 in compliance to application № 6201300002 and prefectorial decision № AR/E26/PS of 29th of March 2011 granting the sole operation of KIWHA over the Delimitation zone that cover the Divisions of Bui and Boyo as follows: Kom, Oku and Nso across Fundong and Belo in Boyo Division Jakiri and Oku in Bui Division.

These zones are located around both edges of the Oku Mountain, the Kilum zone of which includes Oku and Jakiri being the principal pole of production and the Ijim zone represented by Belo, Njinikom and Fundong.

Three principal types of stakeholders are involved in the white honey value chain as follows: the producers' traders, and the forest management agents. The latter intervene essentially in the preservation of natural resources.

Under these conditions, each operator within the said system is charge to identify his/her self as follows:

IDENTIFICATION

IDENTIFICATION	
NAME OF MEMBER	Refers to each operator in the white honey zone that most register with KIWAHA
Date, signature and reference of contract	Each operator must sign a contract with KIWAHA to respect production roles and the date of engagement is made clear with contract No.
Address (Tel, email, P.O. box etc.)	The operator gives his full address.
Honey production zone.	The operator must follow the roles defined in the zone.
Species of bees	All honey and honey products must be of <i>Apis Meilifera a donson</i>
Last date of training of members	Each operator must have undergone training before carrying out operation in the zone
B.	Production
Period of placing Hives	The operator must respect the period of placing the hive in the field of colonization and in the production zone.
Harvest Period	Harvest period begins in April and ends in June and in February after every two years.
Date and Time of Harvest	The date must be mentioned and time must be within the day.
Duration of smoking before harvest.	The time taken to smoke each hive should not exist 30mm to avoid smoke getting adhered to honey and material should come from the forest.
Time and date of deposit at the conditioning centre	The time to smoke should be stated to make sure that the honey is harvested and bring to conditioning before 24 hrs.
Training report of internal controllers.	A panel of controllers are trained to carry control and monitor the activities of operators in the Delimitation zone
Annual internal control (all control report, statistics of internal control, list of recalcitrant producers and measures taken.	All control reports are compiled to annual reports and recalcitrant producers and sanction according to their offence as defined in the role of operation.
Annual protocol report for all inspection carried	The reports are examined and compiled to annual reports by president.
Type and nature of sanctions	The list of sanction is stated in relation with the offence as follows: time warnings, remarks and dismissal or legal charges.

References

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