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Action on Quality Geographical Products for Environment and Sustainability—Keynote Speech at GIES Forum of CIFTIS 2021

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Dear colleagues and friends:

Two years ago, when Professor Liu, C. talked to me that geographers should pay more attention to the studies on geographical indications, especially to the environment protection and sustainable development for them. I believe it is time for us to take action now either for the local or regional development, or for better life of people, as well as for the research of geography.

As the keynote, I would like to share my thoughts on this issue as following.

1 The Relationship between Quality Geographical Products and Their Geo-eco-bio Environment

As the Chinese saying goes, a piece of land nourishes a group of people and a unique life style. Land is the geographical environment, and life style is the synthesis of products, culture, technology, style, and habits. Quality geographical products are produced in a unique environment and are irreplaceable. They have enjoyed good reputation for their specialty and excellence attached with a special locality. They are the intangible assets, business cards and important wealth of this piece of land.

A good example of quality geographical products is traditional Chinese medicine. In the inheritance of traditional Chinese medicine, genuine medicinal materials are the most important. Genuine medicinal materials are special terms for high-quality and pure medicinal materials. They refer to medicinal materials with long history, suitable origin, excellent varieties, high yield, exquisite processing, outstanding curative effect and regional characteristics. In fact, the work of quality geographical products is to find and protect the genuine products of China's biodiversity, so as to realize the authenticity.

Some may ask: what is the difference between “quality geographical products” and “geographical indications”, “geographical specific products” and “geographical traditional-civilized products”?

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The term of Geographical Indications refers GI and Agriculture GI, both of them should be approved by the authorities (in China, GI from the State Intellectual Property Office of P. R. China and the Agriculture Geographical Indications by Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Areas of P. R. China). The term of Geographical characteristic products here is registered trademarks to protect intellectual property and the product could be potential GI. The term of Geographical traditional-civilized product refer to product produced through long-term geographical inheritance and registered trademark to protect intellectual property, it could be potential GI. “Quality geographical products” is the general term of the above three types of geographical products, also called 3G products.

2 Why Promote the Scientific Cognition of Quality Geographical Products?

(1) Not only know what it is, but also need to know why and how it is

China is a country in rich of geo-bio diversities and cultural resources. These resources have nurtured the Chinese nation for thousands of years. Although people have recognized many species, origin and uses in this long history, these species have not been given sufficient scientific interpretation in terms of climate, soil, hydrology, landform, biological community, growth conditions, nutrient demand, effective components, and genetic characteristics. The result is that some knowledge has often stayed at the level of qualitative description, and some quality geographical products fail to realize their due value. With the progress of science and technology, it is time to comprehensively and quantitatively understand quality geographical products and their growth environment. Geographers have the ability and responsibility to shoulder this task, turn traditional experience into scientific cognition, and make the precious resource endowment more profound.

(2) New branch of geography

We often say that although a sparrow is small, it has all kinds of internal organs. While the research on the habitat of quality geographical products may involve a small scope in each case, the work content of comprehensive evaluation will not be less. We first need to explore the pattern of individual quality geographical product under special conditions, and then we can summarize the distribution environment of quality geographical products. It is likely that the mounting geographical researches of quality geographical products will lead to new discoveries.

Geographical research focuses on space, time, process and pattern. Macro analysis must be based on field verification. Without enough small facets, we can't see the whole picture clearly; without the accumulation of pattern at case level, there is no summary of common understanding.

(3) From common understanding to action

There is a common understanding in the world that the health ecosystem is value. How to realize the health ecosystem value to socio-economic development value is a challenging issue. The quality geographical products could help. For example, improve product quality and output through environmental, improve production efficiency and increase added value through the scientific analysis and new technology. By connecting products and consumers to the industrial chain, quality geographical products can obtain good market reputation, benefit the society at large, and make the real brand develop continuously. So, it is time for us to take action together.

3 Experiences

(1) Bottom-up and top-down methodologies

Linking the normal procedure of Geographical Indications, which is identified and approved

by government authorities using the top-down methodology, and the demonstration of GIES cases, which is promoted by a joint team consisted of multi-stakeholder and partners. This effort using bottom-up methodology was warmly welcomed and active evolved by local people in the pilot cases.

(2) Pilot study

Green environment contains treasures. Science and technology should help excavate and utilize the treasures to benefit local people. Under the leadership of Professor Liu, C. and with the efforts of all of you here, after two years of efforts, five cases of habitat study have been completed, and dozens of others are working in this direction. Of course, it is only beginning, since nearly 10,000 geographical products in China. Therefore, there is a long way to go.

(3) An unified guideline

So far, a certain specification works have been practiced based on the pilot case studies. For more cases coming, the unified guidelines should follow and be practiced.

(4) Data and knowledge publishing platform

The *Journal of Global Change Data & Discovery* and the *Digital Journal of Global Change Data Repository* provide a platform for publishing dataset and data paper of each case. I believe it will great help in linking the quality geographical products and the consumers and benefit environment and sustainable development.

4 Recommendations

I fully agree with the work directions proposed by the research group, including:

- (1) reasonably select quality geographical products cases for sustainable development study;
- (2) strengthen the interdisciplinary research on the internal mechanism and relationship between quality geographical products and its habitat;
- (3) optimize the construction of infrastructures such as quality geographical products and habitat case network;
- (4) promote the integration of the products chain.

In addition, I would like to have the following recommendations:

- (1) build a bridge between administration and scientific research, and comprehensively spread the work of environment protection and sustainable development of quality geographical products through the combination of “bottom-up” and “top-down” mechanisms, so as to benefit the local people and economy, promote scientific and technological progress, and spur engineering integration and innovation.
- (2) develop the channels between scientific data and market, so that the quality products and their origin occupy their due position in the trade and market system.
- (3) through mounting case studies, we should make a breakthrough in the theoretical research of ecological value.

Finally, I would like to summarize that the environment and sustainable development of quality geographical products can be likened to experiencing “mother’s taste” with knowledge and wisdom. With strong nostalgia, we will express our love for the land that raised us, and do our best to keep the earth productive, prosperous, and beautiful.

Thank you for your attention!