	Geographical Indication Product Database - Step 1- **Lythe Valley Damsons**	**SOURCE :** **Author : Ness** **Institution : UNEW** **Date : Aug 2006**

DESCRIPTION :

1. NAME OF PRODUCT :

Lythe Valley Damsons

2. COUNTRY AND REGION IN THE COUNTRY:

Lyth and Winster valleys in southern Lakeland south west of Kendal, north west area of England, UK

3. TYPE OF PRODUCT : (including the possible substitutes and imitations of the product)

Damsons (Fruit)

4. DESCRIPTION OF THE PRODUCT AND ITS AREA (including its specific characteristics, conditions of production, main differences with the substitutes) :

Smaller than plums and damsons grown elsewhere in the UK but have a distinctive 'incomparable' nutty flavour. The fruit forms the basis of many recipes from the area including jams, jellies, chutneys, and is used in local wines, beer and gin. The distinctive flavour is attributed to the limestone soils of the area.

5. LINK WITH THE GEOGRAPHICAL AREA (tradition, know how, reputation, soil, climate, etc.):

Historical links are attributed to Crusaders who may have brought damsons back to Britain. However damson trees are often sited around sites of Roman camps. Damson skins were used to produce purple dye from Roman times (43 AD). The distinctive flavour is attributed to the limestone soils of the area.

Culitivation of damsons was a distinctive part of life in Kendal. Before 1939 it is estimated that there were 40,000 damson trees that declined to about 4,000 by the mid 1990s. Sales of damsons reached 250 tons during the damson season from mid September for about three weeks.

The cultivation used traditional methods that lead to distinctive landscape features as the orchards and hedgerows in the valleys are filled with white blossom. This led to local tourism as people from Lancashire would drive through the valleys to enjoy the blossom. The whole of the local community was involved in picking the fruit during September. The peak of this activity was 'Damson Saturday' and 'Damson Sunday' with local tourism and sales from roadsidecarts.

6. PRODUCTION SYSTEM / SUPPLY CHAIN (some data about the number of producers, processors, market structure..) :

The cultivation of the damson trees is in keeping with tradition under the guidqance of the Westmorland Damson Association. The WDA was re-formed in the mid 1990s to re-introduce this tradition. The trees are planted in hedgerows and field boundaries and in small groups in field corners and close to farm buildings. This tradition governs the use of trees from the area and specifies methods for planting, pruning and the use of fungicides and pesticides.

Localised supply chain. The fruit ripens in September and is sold locally.

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7. MARKET AND REPUTATION (size, price premium, attractiveness, growth) :

Local produce with local marketing.

8. APPLICANT / HOLDER (IF ANY) :

Westmorland Damson Association

RELEVANCE : Why is this case important for research in general and for SINER-GI in particular ?

Attempt to re-introduce traditional agricultural practices and products to the area of origin and promote damsons and damson produce such as preserves,

Identified by research by the Land Agency as a product that makes a positive contribution to distinctive landscape character, maintains traditional landscape features and that supports traditional landscape use.

Identified by the Land Agency as a product with potential for protected status.

CATEGORY :

☑ **Origin Product with potential for protected status** ☐ **GI product** ☐ **Recognized GI**