



## Geographical Indication Product Database - Step 1-

**SOURCE :**

**Author :**

**Institution :** CIRAD

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### **Herbal tea *Rooibos* from South Africa**

#### **DESCRIPTION :**

- 1. NAME OF PRODUCT :** *Rooibos*
- 2. COUNTRY AND REGION IN THE COUNTRY:** South Africa – Western and Northern Cape
- 3. TYPE OF PRODUCT : (including the possible substitutes and imitations of the product)**  
*Rooibos* is an herbal tea made from *Aspalathus Linearis*, which is an endemic plant of the *fynbos* biome in South Africa. It is one of the few economically important *fynbos* plants. It is currently not produced anywhere else in the world, but there are threats of possible delocalisation of the production, and trademarks on the name *Rooibos* have been registered by different companies in different countries, which resulted in a major legal battle in the USA that made *Rooibos* famous in other parts of the world.
- 4. DESCRIPTION OF THE PRODUCT AND ITS AREA (including its specific characteristics, conditions of production) :**  
*Rooibos* is the Afrikaans word for 'red bush'. It only grows in the Cedarberg region of the Western Cape Province and the high lying areas in the southern parts of the Northern Cape Province – all part of the *fynbos* biome. It is mainly cultivated but is also harvested from the wild. It is carefully chopped, fermented and then dried and sifted. Through the fermentation process, *Rooibos* gets its characteristic red colour, its distinctive flavour and sweet aroma.
- 5. PRODUCTION SYSTEM / SUPPLY CHAIN (some data about the number of producers, processors, ..) :**  
 About 350 farmers and 8 large processors are involved in *Rooibos* production, with one company accounting for 75% of the total crop. Primary production includes both commercial farmers (98% of production) and small farmers, especially two communities organised in cooperatives that grow, process and market *Rooibos* for the fair trade market.
- 6. LINK WITH THE GEOGRAPHICAL AREA (tradition, technical influences from soil, climate, reputation, etc.):**  
 Use of the plant as a tea traces back to the indigenous San and Khoikhoi people over 300 years ago. Its commercial exploitation outside the area started in 1904. The Climate optimal for *Rooibos* is 380 to 635 mm of rain mainly in the winter with occasional rains in early summer and late autumn. The *Rooibos* plant needs deep, well drained, sandy, acidic soil with a pH of 4.5 to 5.5. Different qualities of the teas are attributed to different soil and climate conditions, with some areas recognised for their better quality.
- 7. MARKET AND REPUTATION (size, price premium, attractability, growth) :**  
*Rooibos* is sold both nationally (40%, 4300 tonnes) and on international markets. It has recorded a huge growth in sales internationally in the last five years. The international trade of *Rooibos* is dominated by a small number of international buyers, especially from Germany. More than 95% of the total export crop is exported in bulk. Increased demand triggers production expansion and gives space to opportunistic behaviours, which are seen as a threat especially for export tea quality.
- 8. APPLICANT / HOLDER (IF ANY) :**  
 Not for now. The South African *Rooibos* Council, established to represent the industry, is considering developing a GI. But no formal application has been undertaken for now.

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

- No GIs has been set up in South Africa up to now. Protection of the name *Rooibos* is seen as an important issue for the industry and for the country as *Rooibos* is seen by the South Africans as part of their national patrimony.
- Development and equity issues are central in *Rooibos* industry and GI development is to be thought in interaction with these issues : *Rooibos* production involves both commercial and resource poor farmers; Black Economic Empowerment in the agricultural industry, land reform, Fair Trade.
- Territorial dynamics are being established with a *Rooibos* heritage route to be launched in September but it is

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|  | <p style="text-align: center;">Geographical Indication Product Database<br/>- Step 1-</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; text-align: center; color: red; font-weight: bold;"> Herbal tea <i>Rooibos</i><br/>from South Africa </div> | <p><b>SOURCE :</b></p> <p><b>Author :</b></p> <p><b>Institution :</b> CIRAD</p> <p><b>Date :</b> 23_08_2006</p> |
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not shared by all the actors.

- The Rooibos growing in the fynbos constitutes both a threat to this highly diverse biome (cleaning of land) and an opportunity to valorise indigenous resources. GI could play a role in promoting sustainable practices.

**CATEGORY :**

☐ **Origin Product**

☒ GI product

☐ Recognized GI