



TECHNICAL BRIEF

A Local Certification System in Georgia: Steppingstones to Meeting Market Demands

THE GEOGAP MODEL

OCTOBER 2021 | Cynthia Steen and the Agriculture & Food Security Practice Team

About This Brief

This brief focuses on the role of certification schemes for agricultural products by tracking the creation of Georgian Good Agricultural Practices supported by the USAID-funded, Chemonics-implemented Zrda Activity.

“Now, when buying GeoGAP-certified products, we have a guarantee that they are locally grown, safe (in terms of chemical and biological contamination), traceable, and environmentally friendly.”

**— Goderdzi Metreveli,
Managing Director,
Adjara Group**

Introduction

With more than 9 million tourist visits in 2019, the Republic of Georgia attracts guests with its authentic cultural opportunities, including genuine culinary experiences. As Georgia's largest hotel, restaurant, and café (HORECA) host, the Adjara Group wanted to distinguish itself by featuring locally grown, safe, and traceable food. While a few large growers in the country were qualified to deliver safe products, the only available certification schemes were primarily export-oriented, expensive, and too exacting for most producers. The Georgian Farmers' Association (GFA), with support from the USAID-funded and Chemonics-implemented Zrda Activity, identified a solution: the creation of the Georgian Good Agricultural Practices (GeoGAP) certification scheme. GeoGAP is a steppingstone, an interim quality certification process that offers a scaled-down version of internationally recognized schemes and that is tailored to the Georgian context.

In many countries, this same tension exists: a growing domestic market demand for high-quality, certified agricultural products, but with existing certification schemes that focus only on export-quality to meet strict requirements, like those of the European Union (EU). Few producers can afford the expensive and time-consuming process to comply with these certification schemes. Those that do make the required investment and management adaptations invariably sell to exporters or high-end domestic buyers to recoup their costs and remain profitable. This leaves a missing middle: farmers who want to improve and certify their quality but cannot afford international certifications, and domestic consumers who are willing to pay a slight premium for quality but have no local certification system to attest to products' value or quality.

Because this is a common challenge, the GeoGAP origin story and its early successes can be instructive for development professionals and others, serving as a model stepping-stone process to help farmers increase the products' value while protecting consumers and the environment.

Demand for Safe, Sustainably Produced Food and the Importance of Standards

The Adjara Group is not unique in its search for safe, local foods. Consumers worldwide increasingly demand quality foods that are produced safely and sustainably. Buyers respond to these demands

by requiring that their suppliers comply with one or more of a variety of standards and certifications, ranging from internationally recognized schemes to private-label contractual agreements between individual producers and buyers.

Perhaps the premier internationally recognized certification provider, Global Good Agricultural Practices (GLOBALG.A.P.) has the goal of safe and sustainable agricultural production to benefit farmers, retailers, consumers, and the environment. Its programs are the result of decades of intensive research, feedback, and collaboration between key stakeholders around the globe, including industry experts, producers, and retailers. To achieve certification, producers must adapt agricultural practices to a set of standards and prove compliance through third-party audits. Adherence to GLOBALG.A.P. standards can increase production efficiency, improve business performance, and reduce waste of natural resources.

Certification Types

There are a few certification types:

- **Food quality and safety**, such as GLOBALG.A.P., Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point, and EurepGAP
- **Social issues**, such as Fair Trade and GLOBALG.A.P. Risk Assessment on Social Practice
- **Specialty markets**, such as organic and Appellation d'origine contrôlée

Definitions

Standards specify and define quantitatively measurable attributes of quality and value.

Grades describe specific allowable variations within a standard.

Certifications are earned when third-party audits independently verify producers' compliance with standards (requirements) to meet client specifications.

Standards and grades, like those required by GLOBALG.A.P., establish the parameters by which producers can certifiably differentiate their otherwise mostly indistinguishable products. Credible, quantifiable standards for agricultural products are essential for producers to increase value with higher prices and/or preferential market access. Market-driven standards inform production decisions about what to plant (variety, size, color), when to harvest (maturity, sugar content, shipping considerations), and where to sell. Standards also provide guidelines to measure, monitor, and manage resources to maximize profitability. Grades within the standards establish relative value for sorted products.

Certification standards (requirements) cover farm-level production; packing and storage; shipping; worker safety; food safety (herbicide and pesticide residues, and mycotoxin levels); and long-term sustainability and environmental issues. In addition, there are value-

Compliance with some standards promotes least-cost input use and additional on-farm efficiencies. These can reduce production costs and may make certification more economically feasible.

added standards, such as organic and proof of origin. Some certifications are voluntary, and some are commercial, that is, mandatory to access preferred markets. Sophisticated markets such as the EU now require compliance with stringent social standards, such as GLOBALG.A.P. Risk Assessment on Social Practice, which aims to protect workers and the environment.

At What Cost?

The cost to obtain certifications varies according to requirements of the buyer and certifying body. Costs typically include:

- **Construction:** On-farm costs can be driven by the required construction of special buildings for worker hygiene (changing rooms, hand washing and toilet stations); approved storage and disposal sites for agriculture chemicals; and worker safety items (protective clothing, first aid stations).
- **Laboratory Analysis:** Buyers frequently require laboratory analysis for proof of chemical residue within approved limits (often zero tolerance), mycotoxin (fungus) levels, and sugar analysis (to measure ripeness and potential shelf life). Many countries and locales do not have adequate laboratory infrastructure, which means that producers must send product samples abroad for analysis; this is costly and time-consuming. For example, Georgia's National Food Agency laboratory is an accredited lab, but it can test only 40 of the country's 200 approved agrochemicals.
- **Audits:** Third-party audits are required for most certifications, and the auditors themselves must be certified or at least approved by the certifying body. When there are few or no local auditors, costs are much higher due to the lack of competition and economy of scale. Audit costs are likely to include travel and lodging, in addition to basic service fees. There are just seven certifying bodies (with ISO 17065 accreditation) in Georgia that cover organic and "bio" products, and national certifications for beverages and processed food. None is certified for fresh produce.
- **Training:** This is an essential component of any capacity building program and to comply with any new standard. For example, implementation costs and consulting services to help a farmer prepare for GLOBALG.A.P. certification audits can run as high as \$5,000 to \$10,000 in Georgia; simply bringing in an auditor can easily cost \$5,000.

Proof of compliance with most certification schemes is based on detailed record keeping. Each row of a farm is mapped for traceability. Chemical use (amounts and timing) is meticulously recorded. Records of social standard compliance are increasingly required.

According to Ilia Kuchulia, GFA certification specialist, “This is far too expensive for a typical small Georgian farmer. In Europe, a farmer can get certified in just three to four hours. Dutch farmers, for example, can get certified for as little as €600 because there are so many certification bodies, and the competition brings down the price”.

While there is undeniable demand for high-quality, safe food, it is price that dictates most customer purchasing behavior. But producers’ compliance with certification requirements increases the cost of delivering food to consumers. So, to decide whether certification is right for them, farmers need to identify and target their preferred market’s consumers and determine whether they will pay for improved quality. Sorting production and allocating grades to markets for different sets of consumers is a way for producers to optimize sales. Grading also allows increased shipping efficiencies (i.e., by not shipping low-quality produce that will ultimately be dumped at an additional cost) and extended shelf life.

To increase the demand for certified products, consumers need to be educated on the true value of added costs, including food and worker safety, longer shelf life, less waste, and environmental protection. In Georgia, for example, where up to 50% of the population’s income is spent on food, typical consumers cannot afford premium prices. Retailers are extremely sensitive to this issue, and competition for market share of food sales is based primarily on price. This is why the GFA’s initial partnership with the Adjara Group and focus on the HORECA sector, where many can afford the increased price, made sense. To continue expanding the GeoGAP label, the GFA is working with the local retail association to build consumer awareness on the value of high-quality, GeoGAP-certified, locally grown, safe food.

Adapting Certification for Georgia

The GFA originally considered developing a local certification scheme with the potential to move into the European or even North American markets. Early on, however, GFA recognized that an intermediate step was necessary to fully upgrade practices to meet international standards, such as those mandated by the Deep and Comprehensive Trade Agreement (DCFTA) with the EU.

At the same time, the Adjara Group was increasingly frustrated as it battled sourcing challenges, including a dependence on imports, when they wanted simply to provide genuine local culinary experiences for their guests. Consistent challenges included poor

quality and unreliable deliveries. Adjara had a relationship with the GFA and approached it for assistance to source local and safe food for their restaurants. The GFA, in turn, engaged the USAID-funded Zrda Activity for support.

The average age of farmers in Georgia is 50 to 60 years old. Many of them operate under the former Soviet culture, in which there was no private land ownership. As well, their knowledge and access to information on modern production technologies, marketable varieties, harvest and post-harvest handling, and overall business orientation is limited.

Local Certification Schemes in Other Countries

- **Kenya-GAP** was launched in 2007 as the first standard in Africa. By 2014, it had achieved local certification for 300 suppliers and training for more than 2,000 farmers.
- **VietGAP** increased the average yield of green vegetables from 4 to 7 tons/1,000m², an increase of 50% to 70% in comparison to traditional production. The quality of vegetables improved, with 90% to 95% uniform grades meeting export standards.

There are many challenges for Georgian agriculture, including the relative low capacity of farmers (little knowledge of modern farming technology or marketable varieties, and limited harvest and post-harvest handling expertise [see box left]); insufficient laboratory capacity; lack of local auditors; and consumers' sensitivity to prices. For these reasons, GFA, Adjara, and Zrda agreed that an intermediate certification process could solve Adjara Group's supply problem and help prepare farmers for rigorous standards. Three existing models were considered:

1. Benchmark GeoGAP to GLOBALG.A.P.: Harmonizing the requirements of different schemes reduces costs, as well as administration time and effort. Producers, suppliers, and buyers profit from the benefits of benchmarking; GLOBALG.A.P. offers two levels of benchmarking recognition:

- **Equivalent Scheme:** schemes with their own G.A.P. requirements and management rules that are recognized by GLOBALG.A.P. as fully compliant with their Control Points, Compliance Criteria, and General Regulations.
- **Approved Modified Checklist:** embedded checklists with their own G.A.P. requirements that are recognized by GLOBALG.A.P. as fully compliant with their Control Points and Compliance Criteria. The checklists use the GLOBALG.A.P. General Regulations as scheme management rules for certification.

2. Develop a private standard from scratch.

3. A private standard based on Local G.A.P.: a product from GLOBALG.A.P. that provides an alternative process and a stepping-stone approach to full internationally recognized certification.

After meeting with stakeholders (see box below) and consulting with Foodplus (the owner of GLOBALG.A.P.), GFA developed a private standard based on Local G.A.P. It used a simplified checklist and was named GeoGAP. With GeoGAP, farmers could meet quality criteria that satisfied Adjara Group's needs, while also taking steps to eventually meet all 222 GLOBALG.A.P. certification requirements.

Stakeholder Consultation Participants

- Farmers
- Industry consultants, certifiers, and accreditation body members
- Representatives of laboratories
- Retailers and hospitality representatives
- Government (food safety) representatives
- Information consultation centers
- GFA representatives
- Zrda Activity representatives

Example GeoGAP Requirements

- Boxes/packaging with GeoGAP produce must contain a label with the GeoGAP certification number, name of product (e.g., apple, coriander), variety, place of origin, and contact information of farmer for traceability.
- Storage of chemicals must be isolated from other materials, as well as locked.
- Producers must hold an annual hygiene training with farm workers and employees.
- Water and ice used for washing/cooling production must have drinking quality microbiological condition (tested and accredited against ISO 17025).

The progression through a Local G.A.P. product to GLOBALG.A.P. moves through three assessment levels: entry, foundational, and intermediate, before it moves on to certification. The breakdown of control point elements (requirements) in each level are as follows:

LOCALG.A.P. CONTROL POINTS AND COMPLIANCE CRITERIA (CPCCS)

	Assessment Primary Farm Assurance			Certification Integrated Farm Assurance
	Entry	Foundation	Intermediate	Global G.A.P
Food Safety	44	44 + 11 = 55	55 + 31 = 86	86 + 16 = 102
Worker Safety	5	5	5 + 2 = 7	7 + 21 = 28
Traceability	16	16 + 1 = 17	17 + 2 = 19	19 + 3 = 22
Environment	9	9	9 + 7 = 16	16 + 53 = 69
Total	74	86	128	222

Potential progression

In Georgia, 80 of the 222 GLOBALG.A.P. requirements were selected for the initial GeoGAP scheme. A smaller, technically oriented group of stakeholders convened to validate the final selection of standards (the checklist), based on consideration of existence and capacity of supporting infrastructure (i.e., laboratories, auditors and certifying bodies, and government support).

Testing and Launching the Certification

Pilot Phase: The pilot phase was implemented from from April through December 2018, under the direction of Q-Point Consultancy (financed by Zrda, managed by GFA). Five fruit and vegetable producers were selected to test the application of the GeoGAP requirements; they all had existing relationships with the GFA and the Georgia Farmers' Distribution Company (GFDC).

Adapting the production and management systems to be based on good agricultural practices was not easy for farmers. Only two of the five pilot farmers achieved GeoGAP certification. Of those who did not complete the process, one chose to pursue the more demanding bio certification; one planted uncertified seed, and was,

therefore, unable to continue in the program; and one improperly positioned his greenhouse, causing him to abandon the project. The two successful farmers were more experienced, business oriented, and technologically savvy, and they held relatively larger land (or greenhouse) holdings.

Starting Expansion: Since the pilot period, two more farmers have received GeoGAP certification, totalling four certified farmers. Ten more producers are complying with requirements, with fee-based consulting and training by GFA. GFA expects to have 10 farmers certified by the end of 2021 and 30 by 2022 (including those certified under a new dairy scheme). To reach these goals, GFA subsidizes small-scale farmers by reducing certification costs (with free training and consulting; printing of farm safety signs and paper documents; and providing personal protection equipment and links to buyers). The association is working with small and medium farmers to pursue group certification.

COVID Impact. Hitting Georgia in early 2020, COVID drastically slowed GeoGAP's initial momentum. The overall Georgian economy fell by 6% as the government enacted strict restrictions for an entire year, which included a 9 p.m. curfew, and informal market and border closures (with no tourists, the HORECA sector was frozen). The closing of informal markets had a significant impact, because only about 25% of sales in the economy take place in formal markets. Additionally, taking on new major international loans resulted in an estimated 12% inflation on all goods.

One positive outcome of COVID, however, has been noticeably increased consumer interest in safe food; in Georgia, packaged food that is purchased in the formal market sector is perceived to be safer. Of course, packaging is required to receive a quality seal, so this trend has been helpful in promoting GeoGAP-certified products.

Developing a certification scheme is a long-term endeavor, and GeoGAP is still in its early stages, with a slowdown during the COVID-19 pandemic occurring just as the scheme was getting off the ground (see box above). The timeline on the next page outlines the timing of development steps to date.

GEOGAP DEVELOPMENT TIMELINE

2017 Concept and plan

Early 2017

- Adjara contacts GFA regarding their challenges obtaining consistent, high quality, local food
- GFA contacts the USAID Zrda project for assistance
- The Agronavti mobile application goes online

May - June

- Consultant hired to develop a Local GAP framework for the Georgian agribusiness sector and determine the needs for further support

December

- ZRDA competes and grants a sub-award to a Dutch certification consulting company, Q-Point to: Build the capacity of GFA to deliver coaching and advisory services and to certify farmers, develop and pilot standards based on GLOBALG.A.P., and support the official registration of the standards

2019 Initial Implementation

January - March

- Finalized several deliverables: General regulations of GeoGAP, GeoGAP checklist (standards) for farmers, record keeping forms for farmers, manual for implementation of GeoGAP
- Selection of a local food safety expert to manage a certification body to oversees the GeoGAP certification process

February

- Government recognition via MOU recognizing GFA as the 'owner' of the GeoGAP seal
- The GFA, with support from Q-Point won the Nuffic/ Orange Knowledge Fund award (€70,000) to train the GFA staff and GFA farmers to implement a group certification scheme, and to develop a quality management system for cooperatives.

September

- Final stakeholder workshop
- First GeoGAP certificate was awarded to the vegetable production company Herbia

2021 Starting to scale-up

- Fourth farmer achieves certification
- GFA working with an additional 10 farmers to prepare for audit
- Mobile lab finished and actively working
- GFA working with Georgia Retailers' Association to allocate shelf space for locally grown and certified products, and related promotional programs
- Started implementation of the communications strategy
- GeoGAP certification program for livestock is launched (funded by USDA and implemented by Land O'Lakes)

2018 Design and training of trainers

April - September

- Stakeholder consultations to gather information and foster awareness and support
- Conduct training of trainers - GFA staff trained in the audit/certification process
- Draft final "checklist" (the standards required to obtain GeoGAP certification)

April - December

- Pilot Phase including GFA advising to farmers on implementing the standards and simultaneous training for auditors / certifying body

2020 COVID slows, but does not stop progress

- USDA-funded Safety and Quality Investment in Livestock project (SIL) was launched. GFA awarded \$1.4 million to build on GeoGAP foundation to certify dairy products (working with Land O'Lakes)
- GeoGAP Communication Strategy developed
- Mobile laboratory set-up for GeoGAP to provide on-farm analysis of soil, water, general hygiene, leaf analysis (for fertilizer recommendations), and gather samples for laboratory analysis (pesticide residue, etc.)

“We are planning to use a significant percentage of locally grown products in the company’s establishments with a farm-to-table concept. In general, we think that implementation of GeoGAP standards, and going through certification, will give farmers [the] ability to also sell their products at higher prices in the retail sector.”

— **Goderdzi Metreveli,**
Managing Director,
Adjara Group

In addition to its HORECA enterprises, the Adjara Group owns more than 4,000 hectares of land and intends to develop the area into a farm project. It will be established as an agricultural hub, creating opportunities for the local population, and a sustainable tourism destination. The group plans to implement good agricultural practices and earn GeoGAP certification at its almond orchard, berry farm, and vineyard.

Promising Results

The GFA and Adjara Group are extremely pleased with GeoGAP activity. Although the scheme is still in the early stages, it has seen promising results.

Market recognition: Market demand is guiding the evolution of the GeoGAP implementation process. The GeoGAP “seal” or “mark” has become well-known in Tblisi markets and other urban areas. Herbia, a vegetable production company, is prominently using the seal on its plastic-wrapped refrigerated products. Retailers increasingly request branded and packaged products. GFA is actively negotiating with the local retail association to allocate shelf space for locally grown and GeoGAP-certified produce. It is starting with packaged products (with the GeoGAP seal), and bar codes are becoming recognized.



Expansion of the GeoGAP certification scheme to include dairy:

The existence and initial success of GeoGAP has established a standardized process for developing certification schemes in Georgia. The USDA-funded Safety and Quality Investment in Livestock project (implemented by Land O’Lakes) will use the GeoGAP process to develop a quality seal for dairy products. GFA will spearhead the activity with a \$1.4 million sub-grant. Initial standards will focus on worker safety (first aid training, protective clothing); animal health and bio security (addressing brucellosis and other zoonotic diseases); post-harvest handling of milk; animal welfare (housing, transportation); and marketing.

Opportunities for access to new markets: A new and promising export product for Georgia is escargot, which creates opportunities for growers with small land holdings. As an export product, escargot has stringent production, packaging, and shipping requirements. GeoGAP enables growers to use the stepping-stone approach to qualify for the certifications that importers require.

During the initial phase, GFA applied for and was awarded an additional €70,000 grant from Dutch donor Nuffic (Orange Knowledge Fund). The grant is for developing a tailored training course, “Value Chain Management, Quality Management and Food Safety: Facilitating Georgian Good Agricultural Practices (GeoGAP) Standard for Primary Production of Fruits and Vegetables by Building Capacity of Georgian Farmers’ Association (GFA) and a Group of Farmers.”

Legal registration and meeting EU requirements: GeoGAP-certified farmers are legally registered and paying taxes, leading an important trend toward meeting legal requirements based on European legislation and in compliance with the DCFTA. Of the more than 1,000 new laws required, more than 200 are related to food and phytosanitary issues. Thirty percent must be addressed by 2027, with 20% under enforcement. GeoGAP is a tool that is helping the country advance toward DCFTA compliance.

Preliminary collaboration with the government: The Georgian government has officially recognized the GeoGAP seal; it granted sole use to GFA through an MOU. Additional work is ongoing with the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Safety Agency on another MOU to align processes for a government seal of quality, as well as GeoGAP certification.

Evolving the GeoGAP Business Model

Adjara Group and the GFA started GeoGAP with significant donor support from USAID and others (see box). Now GFA is making several changes to shift GeoGAP to a market-driven sustainable model:

- **Ensure staff sustainability** by covering salaries and support through income from fee-based services (training, field visits) to prepare farmers for audit. This is a common development challenge because there are few qualified consultants in Georgia; high consultant salaries from donor projects can distort the costs, which make them out of reach for many producers.
- **Build consumer awareness** about food safety, traceability, and sustainable farming through social media (GFA and GeoGAP Facebook pages); local television and print media; and work with school children. These promotions feature farmer profiles and success stories.
- **Expand and diversify** from the initial focus on the HORECA sector to include retail opportunities.
- **Implement the GeoGAP communication strategy**, which was developed and initially funded by Zrda. It now has insufficient funds for full implementation. The action plan includes positioning GeoGAP as a brand, developing a communication platform, preparing digital marketing, placing advertising content on various GeoGAP channels, developing a success story video, and publishing articles about GeoGAP-certified farmers.

Adopting the GeoGAP Model

A local certification program may or may not be the best option in every circumstance. It may be a steppingstone to meet long-term market goals or the final step to meet the requirements of buyers and consumers in the local market. Every country and market context is unique, and no process is entirely appropriate for all situations. The experience of USAID, Chemonics, and GFA to establish, pilot, and implement a local certification scheme, however, provides a framework for consideration in other development contexts.

The Republic of Georgia has many small producers and a local market that can absorb most or all local production at reasonable prices. The vast majority of producers will not target export markets and their challenging demands. It would not make sense, therefore, to push a more sophisticated and demanding certification program. The GeoGAP model should be replicated only if there is a clear market demand from buyers and consumers.

Why GeoGAP Is Working in Georgia

The GeoGAP model can serve as a road map for implementers to think through key considerations and steps, based on several elements that contributed to GeoGAP's early success in Georgia:

Market-driven approach. GeoGAP has seen success in Georgia because local buyers committed to purchasing from certified growers, i.e., the initiative was private sector-led. In Georgia, the Adjara Group is a large buyer with a declared demand for safe locally grown food. Based on its initial success in the hospitality sector, the GeoGAP certified seal gained local recognition offering opportunities to expand the program. The GFA is working with a local retail association to provide shelf space for locally grown and certified produce. Any replication program should be initiated by, and tailored for existing or known buyers and built from there.

Championed by local stakeholders. It is essential for well-functioning organizations and associations to be in place to support a certification process. They help members prioritize needed support and effectively advocate for it. The reputation and reach of the GFA allows it to engage the most relevant and essential stakeholders. GFA administers all aspects of the standard implementation; its staff promotes GeoGAP and consults farmers at all stages of standard implementation; and staff negotiate with stakeholders, including the government and retailers.

Engagement of multiple stakeholders. Farmers and actors along the entire value chain ensured the GeoGAP standards checklist was realistic, affordable, and workable. Consultations with stakeholders resulted in the removal of the most expensive standards; this, in turn, reduced the financial barrier, compared to the more rigorous GLOBALG.A.P. process.

Innovative digital technologies. In 2017, the GFA designed and implemented an award-winning mobile application called Agronavti. This matchmaking platform connects Georgian farmers directly to wholesalers, distributors, and end buyers, including the HORECA sector. The platform contains a record-keeping feature and links to other information, such as approved agrochemicals and irrigation guidelines. GeoGAP farmers have been selling through Agronavti (see box), and the app helped farmers get and maintain contracts during COVID, when in-person meetings were restricted. Sales generated by GFA and Agronavti users (as of March 2021) total \$4.2 million.

A guaranteed buyer. Affiliated with GFA, the GFDC distribution company buys and distributes GeoGAP products. Using Agronavti, GFDC connects GeoGAP producers with buyers, notably, the Adjara Group. GFDC also manages the third-party auditing company established through the scheme.

Initial funding and technical support. The USAID Zrda Activity provided funding for the development of an appropriate and reasonable local certification (Q-Point). Supporting the training of trainers, and subsidizing initial on-farm costs and consulting services to prepare farmers for audits were essential to successfully launch GeoGAP. With their knowledge of the Georgia context, Q-Point helped GFA attract additional funding (€70,000) from Dutch donor Nuffic (Orange Knowledge Fund) for training.

GeoGAP and Agronavti are mutually reinforcing initiatives. GeoGAP will open the Agronavti platform to more buyers, and direct linkages can be facilitated with the wide-scale adoption of GeoGAP. GeoGAP provides underlying compliance requirements so that the GFDC does not need to manage the quality control aspect of the matchmaking process. This reduces costs and makes the app more sustainable. Agronavti, in turn, gives GeoGAP producers direct access to buyers with an expressed interest in quality.

More on Agronavti at these links:

[Playing Matchmaker for Farmers in Georgia](#)

[Digitizing the Agricultural Value Chain](#)

Complementary activities. Simultaneous activities are underway to create demand for certified produce by working with the retail sector and building consumer awareness.

Conclusion

While no certification process is universal, the GeoGAP experience can help local groups — such as farmers' associations and implementing partners — consider whether supporting a certification scheme is appropriate for their context. It is a multiyear process to create the standard and build recognition of its value to farmers and buyers. To do so, the new certification must meet a demand that is not met by current standards. It also must achieve economies of scale to justify the provision of support systems, such as laboratories and audit services. For those pursuing support for a certification scheme, the GeoGAP model can serve as a road map of key considerations and steps so implementers may adapt their approach.

For Further Consideration

Development practitioners considering a similar approach should ask the following questions:

- How much of domestic demand for food can be met by local production?
- Would a certification program promote import substitution?
- Are there specific products that can bear the additional cost of certification?
- Is there sufficient local institutional capacity, including laboratories and audit service providers, to support a certification program?
- Does the local government have the will and capacity to manage and/or enforce a certification system?
- Are current food prices reasonable for the local population?
- How sensitive are various groups of consumers to food prices? Are there subsets of consumers who will pay a premium for higher-value, safe, and traceable products?

CONTACT

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