



*Conseil des  
appellations réservées  
et des termes valorisants*

## **IDENTITY AGRICULTURAL AND FOOD PRODUCTS**

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**(New edition)**

## 1. IDENTITY AGRICULTURAL AND FOOD PRODUCTS

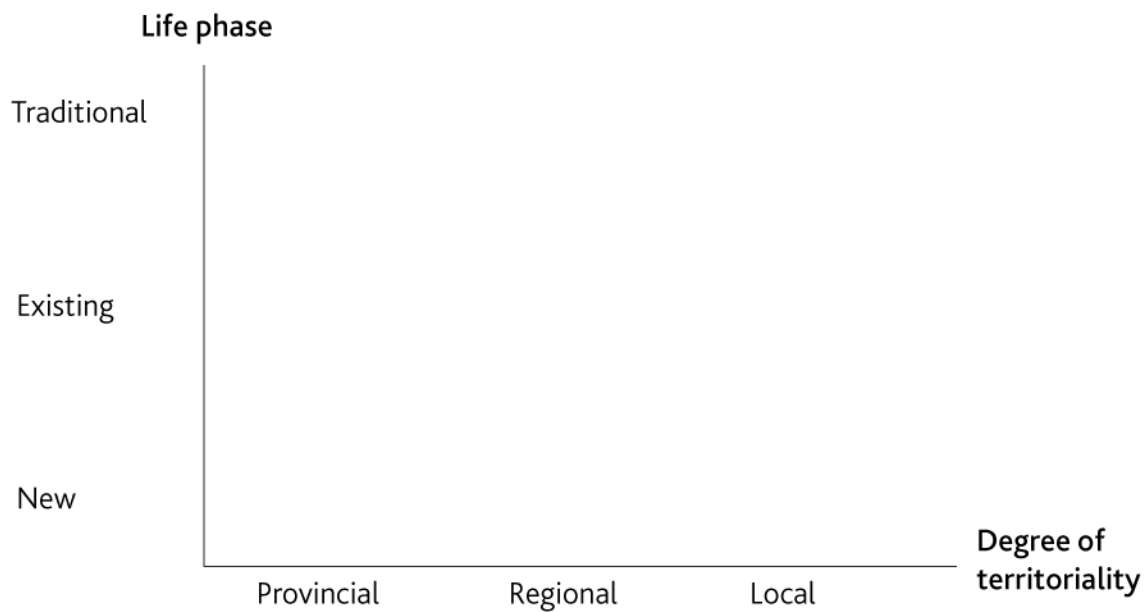
Identity products are agricultural and food products that have signs on their labels that indicate their source, origin or quality (in terms of know-how) and that distinguish them from common products.

Common products comply with the current minimum regulatory requirements and mandatory practices with regards to honesty in selling. The result is usually mass agriculture. In Canada, source labels must comply with the labelling rules of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA). Common products are not certifiable.

Identity products differ from similar common products in their territorial characteristics (source or origin) or quality (environmental for example). There is a wide range of identity products, which will be characterized according to their position on the matrix shown in Figure 1 of this document.

Two main factors are used to classify identity products on the characterization matrix: the degree of the product's territoriality and its life phase.

**Figure 1. Agricultural and food product characterization matrix**

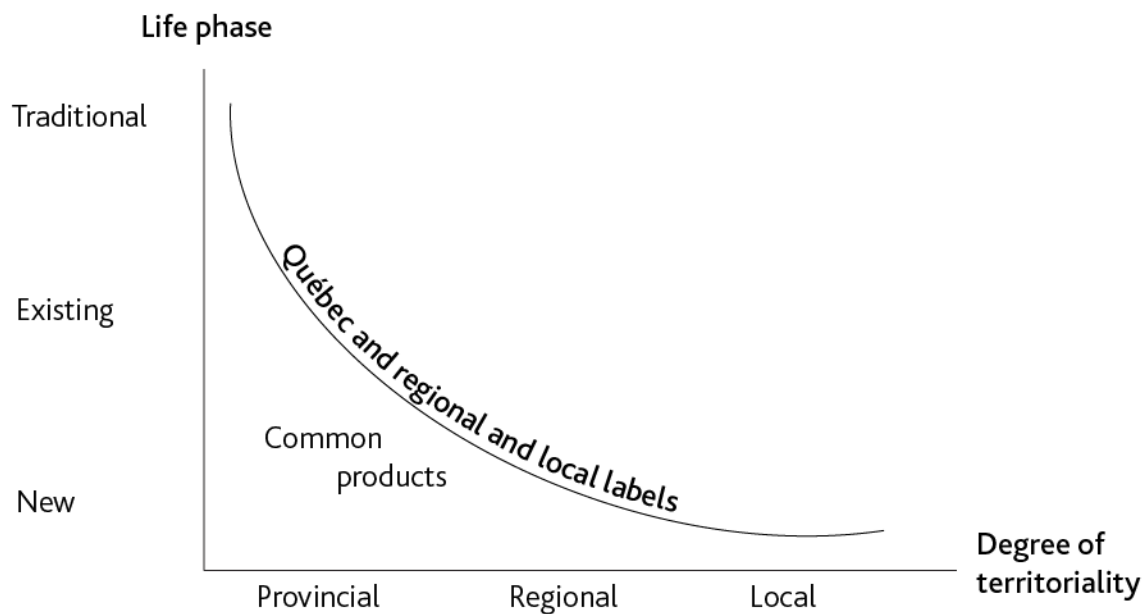


The degree of territoriality refers to a product's place of production or preparation, whereas the life phase distinguishes between new (recent) products, products that have existed for several years, and products that have been on the market for at least a generation (traditional).

### **1.1 Products that use source labels**

This is the first level of identity products for the purposes herein. These products indicate their source using labels that require compliance with conditions to ensure the accuracy of claims mentioning where a product comes from. That is why they are different from common products.

**Figure 2. Products with source labels**



In Québec, the "Aliments du Québec" source label is divided into two categories. It may be used by companies that make products in Québec and whose ingredients come primarily from Québec, as long as they meet the Aliments du Québec organization's requirements.

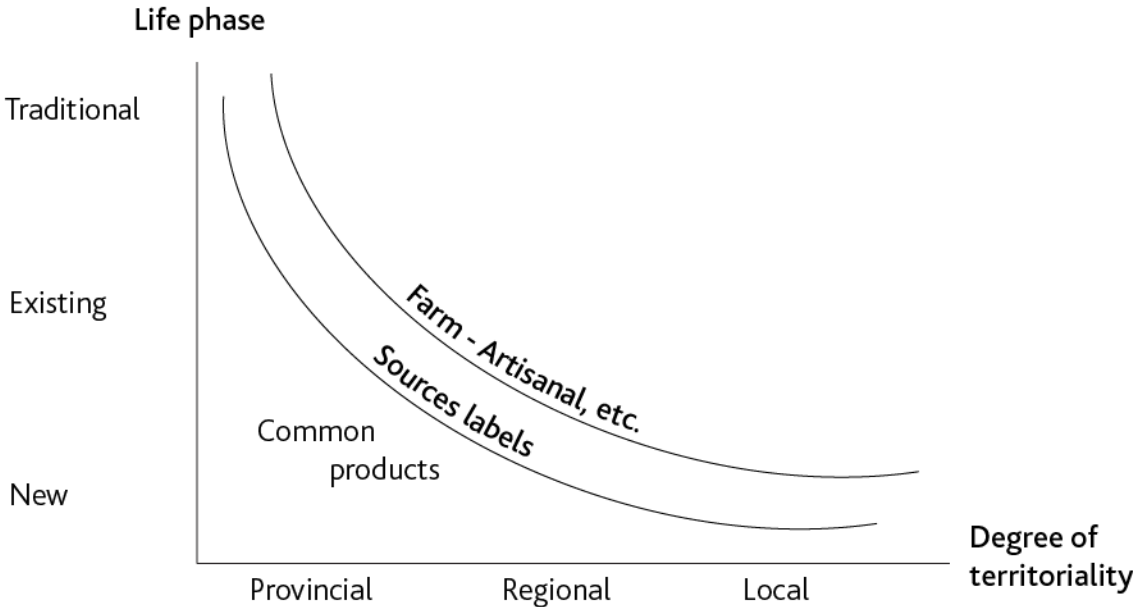
Regional and local source labels are used to indicate local agriculture for consumers in the region or surrounding municipality. When labels are granted in accordance with specific rules to determine the source of products, a self-declaration is usually required from applicant companies in order to use them. Although several regional labels may be used in a province or state, the conditions that must be met vary from region to region.

When allocation programs are compared with each other, use of these labels is usually subject to varying and sometimes disparate conditions. This is confusing consumers who are initially receptive to the idea of buying products with labels that identify their region or quality.

**1.2. Products that use added-value claims**

The use of added-value claims assumes a more specific level of characterization of products. Unlike source labels, which do not necessarily guarantee the know-how of companies that produce or prepare products, the use of added-value claims assumes a collective effort, whereby their users must agree on standards to comply with and obtain certification for their products that are derived from specialty agriculture.

**Figure 3. Products that use added-value claims**

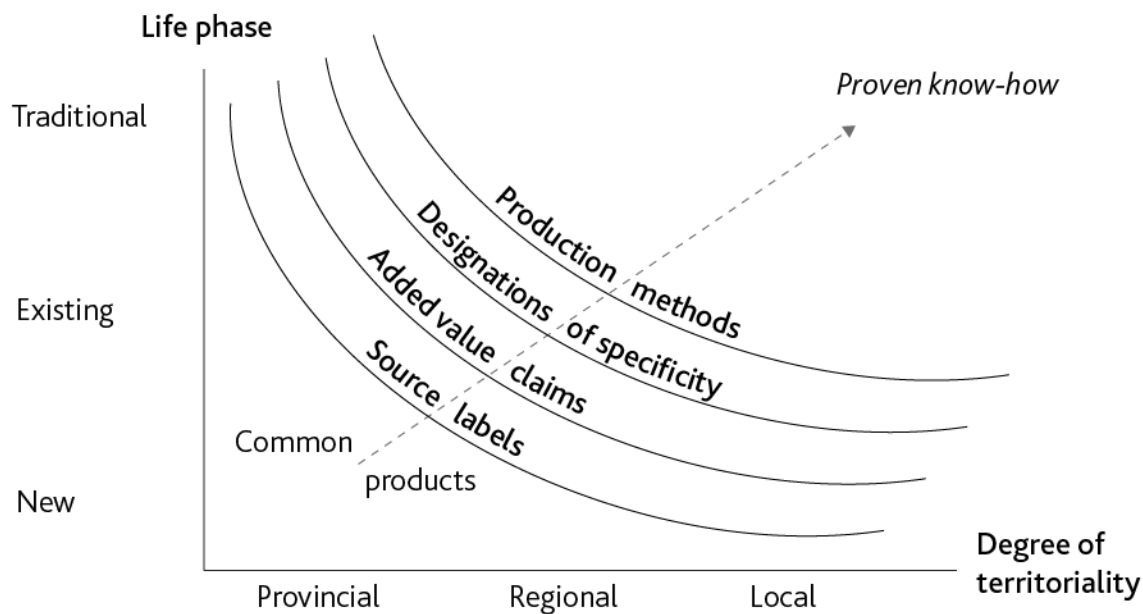


The use of added-value claims is governed by the *Act Respecting Reserved Designations and Added-Value Claims*. The main added-value claims that are anticipated are “farmer,” “artisanal”. In Québec, (farmer) cheese and (artisanal) bread are products that will likely have added-value claims in the medium term.

### 1.3 Products that use signs of quality

The signs of quality provided for under the *Act Respecting Reserved Designations and Added-Value Claims* are the attestation of specificity and production method. They are designations whose use is the result of a collective effort to develop and comply with a specification manual for products that are also derived from specialty agriculture.

**Figure 4. Products that use signs of quality**



Attestation of a production method may be granted to both new and traditional products. Emphasis is mostly placed on compliance with a specification manual and on product certification. Products derived from organic farming and integrated farming are good examples of production methods. In Québec, the organic production method has been recognized as a reserved designation since 2000, and is protected under the Québec Regulation.

The designation of specificity aims at increasing the value of a product with specific features that distinguish it from other similar products in the same class. Emphasis is also placed on compliance with a specification manual and on product certification.

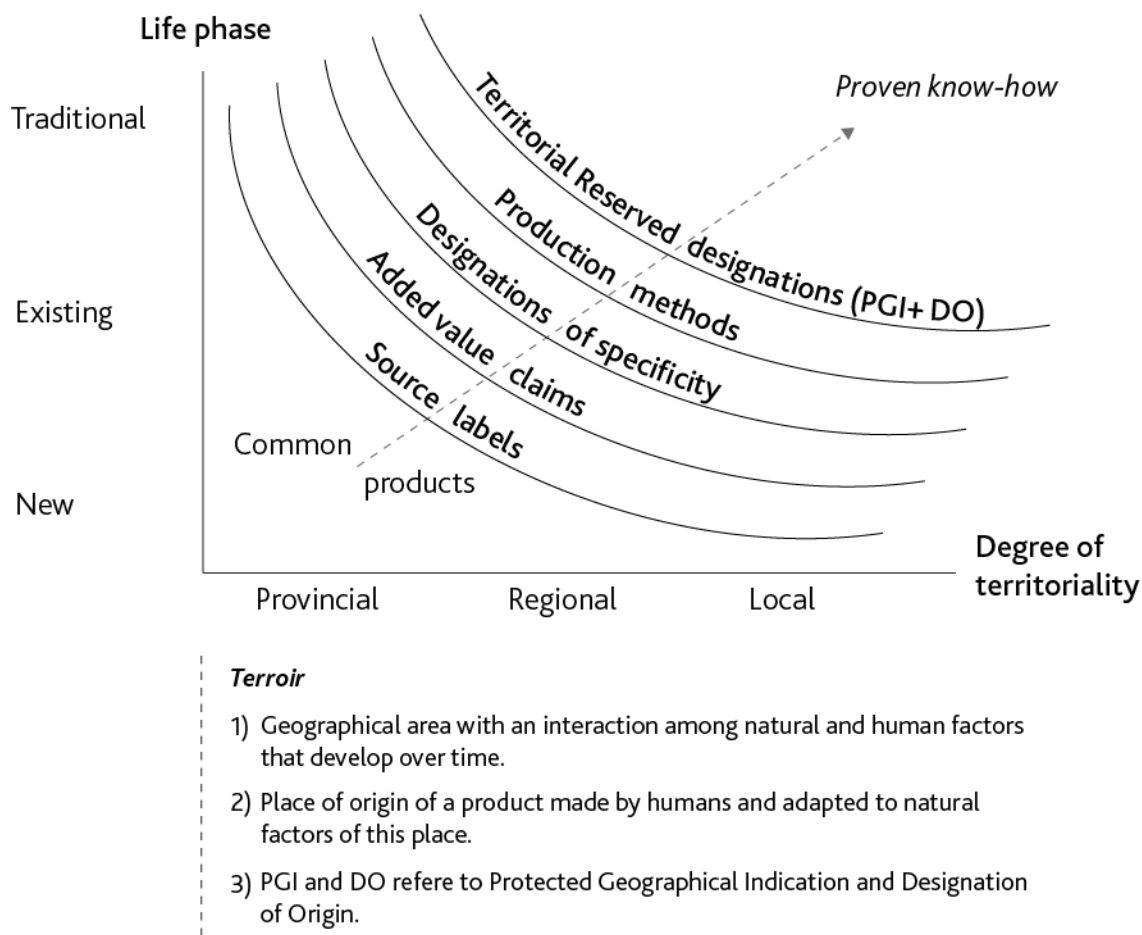
Many Québec companies market products whose high quality is ensured by compliance with a private specification manual. These products are not eligible for recognized designations, since they are not the result of a collective effort. Companies that produce and sell these products therefore choose to register a trademark in order to promote them.

#### **1.4 Products that use signs of origin**

The signs of origin provided for under the *Act Respecting Reserved Designations and Added-Value Claims* are the Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) and the Designation of Origin (DO). They are designations whose use is the result of a collective effort to develop and comply with a specification manual. The resulting products have a more or less pronounced link with their region of origin and have characteristics deriving from this regional geographical *terroir*.

The use of such designations is conditional upon the certification of the product by an accredited certification organization. In Québec, there are many examples of products that may potentially bear geographical designations. Several have been identified by French and Swiss researchers, who have presented their research findings at symposiums held in Québec and abroad. Among these products, so far only one has been recognized as a reserved designation, “Agneau de Charlevoix” (Charlevoix lamb), as a PGI.

**Figure 5. Products that use signs of origin**



## Conclusion

Governments in several countries have established regulatory schemes for agricultural and food products. They are based on mandatory certification of products complying with standards and which will be marketed under a specific food name or designation (appellation). At the same time, one can find voluntary certification schemes that allow certified and non-certified products bearing the same designation to coexist.

Products that are protected by mandatory certification schemes correspond to reserved designations that are the concern of the public domain. As a result, the group of designations including attestations of the production method (such as the “organic” designation), designations of origin (DO), protected geographical indications (PGI) and attestations of specificity are subject to governmental oversight. Such designations have in common the application of specification manuals that, on one hand, are approved by governmental authorities and that, on the other hand, prescribe requirements often more precise and stringent than those contained in regulations applicable to the whole of agricultural production and food manufacturing within an entire country, state or province.

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