



# INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

## Geographical Indications As A Tool For Rural Economic Governance In Karnataka: Exploring The Untapped Potential Of New GI Registrations For Local Crops

Author:

MADHU KUMAR A M  
REVA SCHOOL OF LEGAL STUDIES

### Abstract

Geographical Indications (GIs) offer a promising framework for empowering rural communities by enhancing product identity, securing higher incomes, and preserving cultural heritage. Karnataka, with its rich agro-biodiversity and cultural depth, has emerged as a leading state in GI registrations. However, despite successful examples like Coorg Arabica Coffee and Byadagi Chilli, the state's local crop varieties remain underutilized in the GI ecosystem. This article explores how expanding GI registration to currently unregistered indigenous crops can become a tool for inclusive rural economic governance. It concludes with a set of strategic recommendations to harness this untapped potential through institutional strengthening, farmer mobilization, and policy integration.

### Keywords

Geographical Indications, Karnataka, Rural Governance, Local Crops, Agricultural Policy, Economic Development

### 1. Introduction

Geographical Indications (GIs), as defined under the WTO's TRIPS Agreement and implemented in India through the Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999, serve to link unique regional products with their place of origin. They function as an intellectual property right that safeguards traditional knowledge, enhances product credibility, and allows for premium pricing.

In Karnataka, GIs have proven successful in branding agricultural and craft products. However, the GI regime is still underutilized in the case of many indigenous crops that are economically, culturally, and ecologically significant. This article investigates how GIs can be used more broadly in Karnataka to strengthen rural economic governance by expanding the GI coverage to more local crop varieties.

## 2. GIs and Rural Economic Governance

GIs play a multidimensional role in rural governance:

- **Economic Empowerment:** GIs help smallholder farmers earn better incomes through product differentiation.
- **Institutional Development:** They foster the creation of cooperatives, farmer producer organizations (FPOs), and GI user associations.
- **Cultural Preservation:** GIs protect traditional agricultural knowledge and link it with identity-based governance.
- **Sustainable Development:** Many GI crops are organically grown and adapted to local ecologies, promoting environmental sustainability.

In Karnataka, these aspects are reflected in GI-tagged goods like Mysore Silk, Channapatna Toys, and Ilkal Sarees.

## 3. Current GI Landscape in Karnataka

Karnataka has over 45 GI registrations across agricultural, handicraft, and food sectors. Prominent examples include:

- Coorg Arabica Coffee – High-altitude coffee with global demand
- Byadagi Chilli – Known for deep red color and low pungency
- Navalgund Durries – Traditional rugs woven by women’s cooperatives

While these examples demonstrate the success of GIs in improving economic outcomes, the benefits remain concentrated in a few sectors and districts.

## 4. Untapped Potential: Indigenous Crops for GI Registration

Several local crops in Karnataka qualify for GI registration due to their uniqueness, historical relevance, and marketability. These include:

Crop	Region	Key Traits
<b>Mandya Ragi</b>	Mandya	Nutrient-rich finger millet cultivated using traditional methods
<b>Gulbarga Toor Dal</b>	Kalaburagi	Known for size, taste, and adaptability to dry climates
<b>Sannakki Rice</b>	Uttara Kannada	Aromatic fine-grain rice cultivated in forested areas
<b>Karimundga Mango</b>	Dharwad	Unique flavor, organically grown
<b>Malnad Ginger</b>	Western Ghats	High oil content, grown in hilly forest soils

These crops have socio-economic and ecological value, but lack institutional support for GI filing, marketing, and protection.

## 5. Challenges to Expanding GI Coverage

Despite the potential, several challenges hinder the registration and effective use of GIs for local crops:

- **Low Awareness:** Farmers and rural communities are often unaware of GI benefits.
- **Institutional Gaps:** Lack of coordination between agricultural, marketing, and legal entities.
- **Post-registration Neglect:** Many registered GIs fail to receive follow-up support for branding or export promotion.
- **Limited Capacity:** Farmer groups may lack the organizational structure to manage a GI effectively.

## 6. Policy Recommendations

To unlock the untapped potential of new GI registrations, the following strategies are suggested:

1. **District-level GI Facilitation Cells:** Set up units under the agriculture/horticulture departments to identify potential crops and guide local stakeholders.
2. **Capacity Building:** Conduct training programs on GI registration, IP rights, and branding for FPOs, SHGs, and panchayats.
3. **Integrated Value Chain Support:** Link GI-registered crops to ODOP (One District One Product), e-commerce platforms, and rural tourism.
4. **Public-Private Partnerships:** Encourage NGOs and private firms to assist in marketing and certification processes.
5. **Research and Documentation Grants:** Fund studies to document the history, characteristics, and production methods of potential GI crops.

## 7. Conclusion

Geographical Indications offer a high-impact, low-cost strategy for rural economic transformation. Karnataka's successful GIs highlight their ability to improve income, preserve traditions, and empower rural communities. Expanding GI registration to cover more local crops can enhance Karnataka's agricultural brand, increase rural resilience, and make governance more participatory and place-based. With the right institutional support and community involvement, GIs can become a cornerstone of rural development strategy in the state.

## References

- Government of India (DPIIT). GI Registered Products List.
- FAO. (2009). Linking People, Places and Products.
- UNCTAD. (2012). Geographical Indications: An Introduction.
- Economic & Political Weekly, relevant articles on rural governance and GIs.
- Interviews with officials from Karnataka State Agriculture and Horticulture Departments.