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## Press Release: Harnessing Policy Support for Geographical Indications in Nigeria – Capacity Building Workshop on GIs for Public Sector in Nigeria

**In one of its first engagements in Nigeria, on 22 April 2021 the Africa Intellectual Property Rights and Innovation Project (AfrIPI) delivered a high-level public sector capacity building workshop on Geographical Indications (GIs), in partnership with IP First Group and the Africa International Trade and Commerce Research (AITCR).**

The event took place at the Transcorp Hilton in Abuja and engaged stakeholders across the Legislative, Executive, and Judicial arms of the Nigerian Government. It analysed the diverse socio-economic benefits associated with developing a robust IP legislation and enhancing policies that support GIs, and provided participants with the opportunity to explore elements of a plan of action for the development and promotion of GIs in Nigeria. AfrIPI, IP First and AITCR equally used the platform to whip up interest for GIs as a pathway to secure greater commitment from public stakeholders on the need for a national strategy.

“The GI, coupled with a well functioning intellectual property rights set-up, will assist in providing a pull effect that can improve productivity and competitiveness in the agricultural sector which can then be used to support sustainable food systems and ultimately our economic diversification effort”, stated Muhammad Sabo Nanono, Federal Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development of Nigeria.

“It is imperative to also highlight the coming into effect of the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement (AfCFTA), which puts a responsibility on decision makers, to begin the discourse of updating Industrial Property legislation (where necessary), including the identification of unique products with cultural heritage through Geographical Indications (GIs)”, stated Mariam Y. Katagum, Minister of State for Industry, Trade and Investment.

“GI’s are a fantastic development tool for rural communities. They symbolise quality and authenticity - and reward farmers for their work and knowhow. The EU is very keen to work with our Nigerian friends to stimulate GI products and protection in Nigeria, which has so much untapped potential. Good food is good business!”, said John Clarke, Director for International Affairs at the Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development of the European Commission.

“GIs do not confer individual rights (as is the case with patents or trademarks). Upon registration, the right to use a geographical name belongs to the community of producers in a given geographical area. It empowers those who are involved at the origin of so many wonderful products. And this is what makes GIs a perfect tool for local development.”, added Gregor Schneider, Senior Legal Counsellor at the European



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Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO) and Deputy Project lead at AfrIPI. Kasim Wasiri, Professor of Intellectual Property Law, Department of Public Law, Faculty of Law in Nigeria, gave the assembly a national outlook on GIs in Nigeria. Renowned international experts provided examples of not only European countries but also from Asia (Kampot pepper, Cambodia) and neighbouring countries (Poivre de Penja, Cameroun).

Nigeria currently has a variety of unique products including “sokoto goats’ skin”, “Ijebu garri”, “skin hide of Kano”, “Kilishi of Northern Nigeria”, “Yaji” (dry pepper), “Nsukka Yellow pepper”, “Aso Oke, Awori mat”, “Fura”, and many more. However, none of these have benefitted from any comprehensive registration that would accrue value added from international recognition and commercialisation.

### Background information

**AfrIPI** ([www.afripi.org](http://www.afripi.org)) is an international cooperation project funded and directed by the European Union, co-founded and implemented by the European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO). It has an initial duration of 5 years starting from February 2020. The overall objective of AfrIPI is to facilitate intra-African trade and African and European investment. It specifically aims to create, protect, utilize, administer, and enforce Intellectual Property Rights across Africa, in line with international and European best practices and in support of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and the African Union’s Agenda 2063. **Africa International Trade & Commerce Research (AITCR)** is an international trade consultancy firm for the African market that works on four key areas; Trade, Research, Policy and Invest-in-Africa related projects. AITCR is a knowledge-based organization that delivers forward-thinking, innovative research with relevant data that support evidence-based decision making, covering various sectors. Over the years, AITCR has worked on several projects, including advocacy work on Geographical Indication in Nigeria. **IP First Group** supports the creation of an environment where innovation and creativity can flourish, which is a critical imperative for the economic development of the countries of Africa. The organisation also supports the establishment of intellectual property framework that guarantees the recognition of and respect for the rights of innovators, inventors and content creators in the products of their intellectual capacities.

### For more information

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