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# The National Contest of Typical Food Products: a strategic tool to promote quality and market access

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## Résumé

To target terroir products at large, UNIDO in partnership with the Swiss Secretariat for Economic Affairs and the Fondation Rurale Interjurassienne, has been working over the past 7 years to promote the setup of National Contests for typical food products.

Based on the Swiss National Contest, a full-fledged methodology and tools have been developed and adapted to the target country needs. The methodology has already been tested in Morocco and Tunisia and UNIDO and SECO are currently duplicating the successful experience in Egypt and Georgia in the Caucasus region.

The National Contest for Typical Food Products is a national event, bringing together consumers and producers around typical food products. The contest is designed, organized and conducted with and for the consumers and helps narrowing the distance between producers and consumers.

For this reason the National contests can be considered a powerful tool to foster market access of typical food products and ensuring nation-wide communication for small scale producers. They also promote quality and encourage healthy competition among producers and products from different regions. By focusing on hedonistic qualities, the contest enables policy makers and those involved in the development of agro-food sectors to focus attention on the know-how of producers, provide constructive feedback and also better tailor training and support to improve product quality.

With the technical assistance provided by UNIDO in the framework of the PAMPAT project (Projet d'Accès aux Marché des Produits Agroalimentaires et du Terroir, <https://pampat.ma/en/>), the first Moroccan Contest for Typical Food Products was held in Rabat in November 2014, and three editions have been organized so far by the National Agency for Agricultural Development (ADA). The Contest is organized biannually, and currently fully funded by the Ministry of Agriculture and integral part of the Agricultural Development Strategy.

Thanks to the success of the Moroccan National Contest, the Tunisian Agency for Agricultural Investments (APIA) took the decision to organize the 1st Tunisian Contest of typical food products in 2016. Since then, through the PAMPAT Tunisia support, two editions have been successfully organized by APIA and the third one will take place in 2021.

In both countries, an active promotion of the awarded products is defined by the national partners and products are promoted both in country and internationally. This includes for

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example sales in national and international retailers' shops as well as in local food shops, participation to trade fairs and cooking shows with famous TV chef cooks, large media communication campaigns, etc.

A study undertaken in 2019 in Morocco and Tunisia targeting awarded producers highlighted that 100% of the interviewed producers were satisfied to have participated, 30% had gained access to new clients and/or markets and sales of the awarded products increased between 30 and 50%.

There is currently a growing interest to duplicate this successful experience in other countries and it is expected to have the National Contest in Egypt and Georgia between 2021 and 2022.

**Mots-Clés:** Typical food products, Contest, Awards, Market Access, Tunisia, Morocco, Egypt, Georgia, Consumers