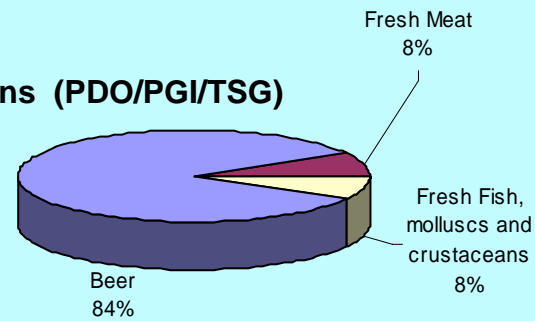


# Indicator 8 Loss of cultural distinctiveness

SAIL sub-regions (PDO/PGI/TSG)



Whitstable oysters  
Whitstable Kent



Kentish ale and Kentish strong ale  
Faversham, Kent



Faro, Geuze, Kiek and Vieux Bruges  
Bellegem, Kortrijk, Ingelmunster



Volailles de Licques  
Le West



- Number of products protected by European Union schemes Protected Designation of Origin (PDO), Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) and Traditional Speciality Guaranteed (TSG) and located in coastal districts, provinces and sub-regions.
- Number of products certified by national or regional schemes guaranteeing their quality, authenticity and origin and located in coastal districts, provinces and sub-regions.

## Key Message

- The number of products protected by EU schemes is increasing slowly year by year which suggests a desire to halt the erosion of regional character and distinctiveness.
- Products whose origin and quality are certified by national or regional schemes are far more numerous indicating that local authenticity is a marketable commodity.
- However, there is no evidence that specifically ‘coastal’ products have a greater or lesser impact in promoting regional identity than do non-coastal products. Indeed, within the SAIL region, only Whitstable oysters are protected by an EU designation.

## Why monitor loss of cultural distinctiveness?

In the past, coastal regions were more distinct, both from non-coastal areas and from each other, than they are today. Differences would have been observed in how people spoke, in their names, in how they dressed, in their behaviour and beliefs, in what they did for a living and how they did it, in what they ate and drank, in the design of their buildings and in their use of local materials. The exact amount of difference is unknowable (and in any case would have varied from topic to topic and from region to region) but, taken together, such differences would have been enough for regions (and sub-regions) to have their own ‘character’. Nowadays, it is argued, those differences are being lost and increasingly places look like everywhere else. This observation is by no means restricted to coastal areas. However, the impact of mass tourism, second homes

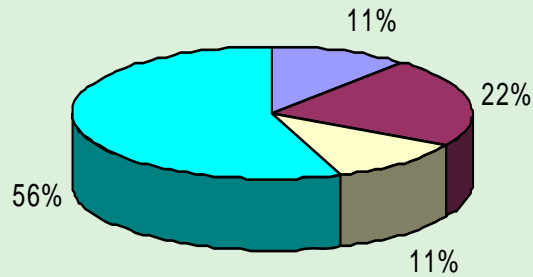
and urban sprawl is alleged to have eroded the individual character of coastal communities more rapidly than elsewhere. Paradoxically, people in general and tourists in particular are looking increasingly for diversity and distinctiveness rather than similarity and uniformity. Hence, coastal communities are all searching for the unique selling proposition which will entice visitors and foster a sense of belonging among local residents.



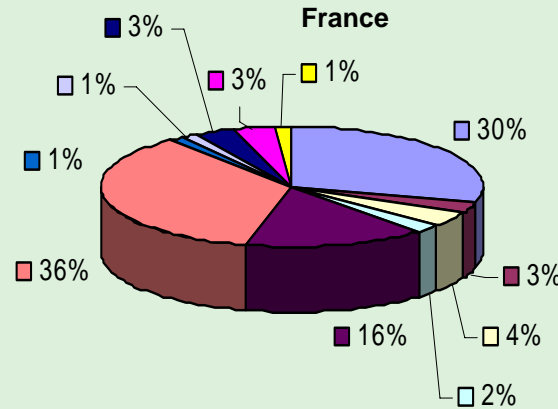
PGO/PGI categories	Belgium		The Netherlands		France		United Kingdom		All SAIL-countries	
	PDO	PGI	PDO	PGI	PDO	PGI	PDO	PGI	PDO	PGI
Cheeses	1	0	4	0	38	4	8	3	55	57
Meat-based products	0	2	0	0	4	0	0	0	6	6
Oils and fats / Olive oils	1	0	0	0	6	0	0	0	7	0
Table olives	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	3	0
Fruit, vegetables and cereals	0	0	1	1	9	13	1	0	25	25
Fresh meat (and offal)	0	0	0	0	3	47	3	4	53	57
Bread, pastry, cakes, confectionery, biscuits and other baker's wares	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
Fresh fish, molluscs and crustaceans and products derived therefrom	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	3	0	5
Other products of animal origin (eggs, honey, milk products excluding butter etc.)	0	0	0	0	3	2	1	0	6	6
Other drinks	0	0	0	0	3	2	0	3	5	8
Non-food products and others	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2	0
Beer	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>166</b>	<b>180</b>

Share of products protected by PDO/PGI/TSG labels in the SAIL countries

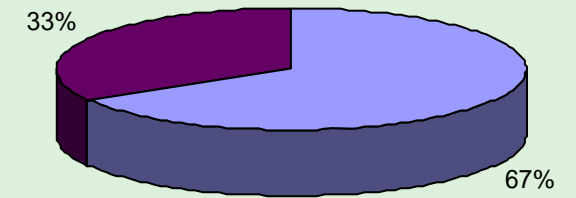
Belgium



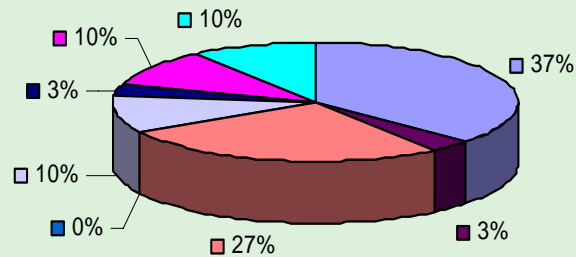
France



The Netherlands



United Kingdom



- Cheeses
- Meat-based products
- Oils and fats / Olive oils
- Table olives
- Fruit, vegetables and cereals
- Fresh meat (and offal)
- Bread, pastry, cakes, confectionery, biscuits and other baker's wares
- Fresh fish, molluscs and crustaceans and products derived therefrom
- Other products of animal origin (eggs, honey, milk products excluding butter etc.)
- Other drinks
- Non-food products and others
- Beer

Where do the data come from?

The EU Protected Food Names Schemes came into force in 1993 and provide for the protection of food names on a geographical or traditional recipe basis, similar to the familiar *appellation d'origine contrôlée* system used for wine. The schemes highlight regional and traditional foods whose authenticity and origin can be guaranteed through an independent inspection system. Once approved, product descriptions including producer information are displayed online at [http://europa.eu.int/comm/agriculture/qual/en/prodb\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/agriculture/qual/en/prodb_en.htm).

A problem with measuring distinctiveness by reference to products granted PDO, PGI and TSG status is that there are currently so few of them. Hence we need to supplement the number of products in the EU schemes by including products certified by national and regional schemes. All countries have such schemes, most of which use similar criteria for product inclusion as the EU schemes.

We have chosen 'regional products' - clothes, fabrics, furniture, jewellery, artefacts, toys, building materials, and especially food and drink - to represent regional differences because they stand for tradition and character in that they directly link locality and resources with people and know-how. A decline in the number of regional products suggests an erosion of regional character and distinctiveness. Conversely, healthy sales of a range of regional products would indicate, at the very least, a determination to foster a sense of place and the desire to retain cultural differences.

### What does the indicator show?

Since the adoption of the regulations for PDO/PGI/TSG labels in 1992, over 650 products have been registered as such. Most articles are cheeses, fresh meat, meat-based products, fruit and vegetables. Other products include olive oil and honey. SAIL countries together have more than 180 products protected by these labels while only 12 are exclusively linked to the Southern North Sea sub-regions. The results for 2005 are summarized in the table.

In Belgium, five products (all beers) are registered as Traditional Speciality (TSG) while the UK has only one so far. In France and The Netherlands there are no products protected by the TSG label. In addition, there are a number of regional quality labels: The Netherlands and Essex have one such label each while Belgium has two, France has three and Kent none. These labels are "Essex for Seafood" in the UK, "Produits du Terroir", "Label Rouge" and "l'Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée" in France, "Het beste van bij ons" and "Streekproduct.be" in Belgium and "Streekeigen Producten Nederland" in The Netherlands. Products associated with the coast or the sea are not explicitly identified as such in the PDO/PGI/TSG system. There is however one clear-cut example: the Whitstable oysters linked to the coastal village Whitstable in Kent.

### What are the implications for planning and managing the coast?

The regulations on the protection of geographical indications and designations of origin and on certificates of specific character are at the forefront of European quality policy. They should help to promote rural development, the production of diversified products and increase the competitiveness of products identifiable by quality labels, ensuring their protection. The regulations also have a major economic impact, since only producers from the relevant geographical area will be able to use the name once it has been registered at Community level. The main goals of the European System for developing protected foodstuffs is: (1) to encourage diverse and agricultural production;

(2) to protect product names from misuse and imitation; and  
(3) to help consumers by giving them information concerning the specific character of the products.

#### How reliable is the indicator?

Although labels such as PGO/PGI/TSG are supposed to protect the gastronomic heritage, culinary traditions, local specialties and ancestral skills of the various regions of the Community, it is difficult to say if they actually reflect the distribution of those qualities among member states.

#### References

The European project 'Euroterroirs' in 1993 (Conseil National des Arts Culinaires), Les Produits du Terroir in France (<http://www.lesproduitsduterroir.com>), the *Institut National des Apellation d'origine* (AOC), the 'Westhoek' (<http://www.hetbestevanbijons.be>) in the province of West-Vlaanderen and 'Streekproduct' in Flanders (<http://www.streekproduct.be>), all work according to criteria recognizing tradition and historic references. The 'Erkend streekproduct' initiative in The Netherlands (<http://www.erkendstreekproduct.nl>) and the initiatives in Kent (<http://www.producedinkent.co.uk>; <http://www.atasteofkent.co.uk>) refer to environmental production schemes. The Study Centre for Traditional Gastronomy has screened the regions of Zeeland, Nord-Pas de Calais and Flanders (<http://www.asg.be>) by very strict criteria for traditional foodstuffs; however, no recognized label has been developed under this academic exercise.

