



## ISSUE BRIEF Volume I, 2025



# Effective Utilization of Geographical Indication for Socio-Economic Benefits and Export Diversification



Ministry of Industries  
Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

## What is GI

Geographical Indications (GIs) are a form of intellectual property (IP) that link products to their specific geographical origins, reflecting unique qualities, reputations, or characteristics attributable to that location, promotes socio-economic development, preserve cultural heritage, and enhance the market value of traditional products, allow producers to differentiate their goods to get premium prices, and gain consumer trust, thereby fostering rural development, sustaining livelihoods, and retaining wealth within local communities.

GIs also safeguard traditional knowledge and production methods, protect consumers from misrepresentation, and create opportunities for tourism and broader economic engagement.

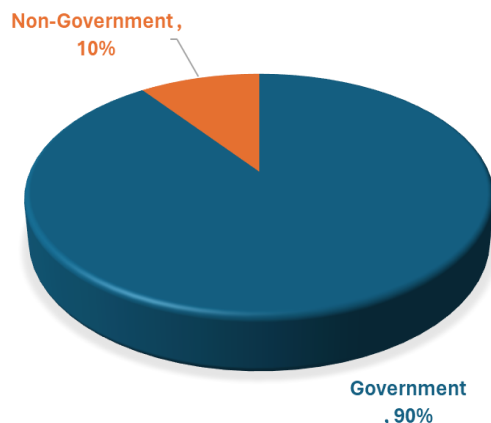


## Highlights:

- No. of registered GI is 60 under the GI Act 2013, mostly agricultural & handicraft products, highlights our traditional knowledge and culture.
- 90% are applied by the Government Organizations, such as DC, UNO, Handloom Board, BSCIC, etc, remaining 10% by the private sector associations.
- Export of key GIs is nearly one billion and support more than 4.5 million livelihoods mostly in the rural areas.
- GI Tag has not yet been implemented by DPDT, MoI.
- Community mobilization, Marketing & branding are at an initial stage.

## So far status of GI applications

### GI APPLICANTS SUMMARY



Around 90% of GI applications in Bangladesh are initiated by top government organizations—Deputy Commissioners (45%), Handloom Board (15%), BSCIC (5%), Upazila Nirbahi Officers (5%)—with specialized boards and research institutions contributing, and only 10% from private associations, reflecting a predominantly top-down, public sector-driven approach.

Community mobilization and Commercialization are at a nascent stage in contributing to the socio-economic development of rural agrarian economy.

## Legal Framework of Bangladesh

1. Geographical Indication of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 2013, supported by the GI Rules, 2015.
2. Globally, GIs are protected through two primary systems: sui generis systems and trademark systems.

## International Frameworks for GI Protection

1. WTO TRIPs Agreement (Article 22(1) defines GIs, while Article 22(2) mandates preventing misleading use and unfair competition. Article 23)
2. Lisbon Agreement (Geneva Act)

## Business Initiative Leading Development (BUILD)

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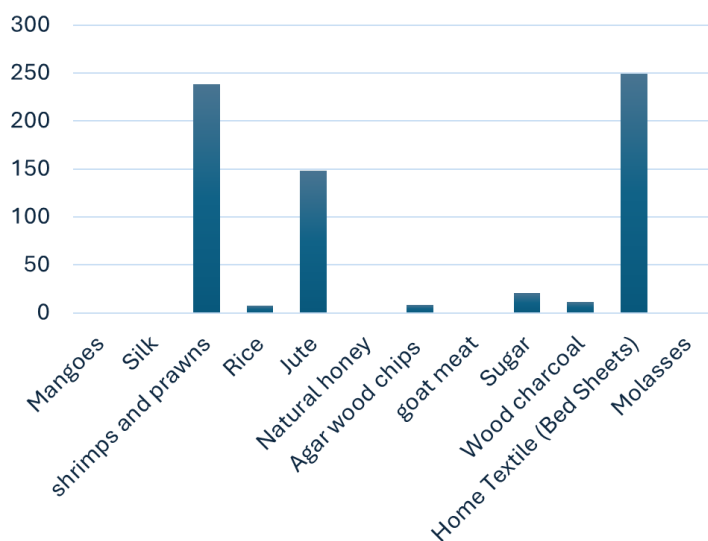
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## Business Initiative Leading Development (BUILD)

## Market Diversification & Export Potential

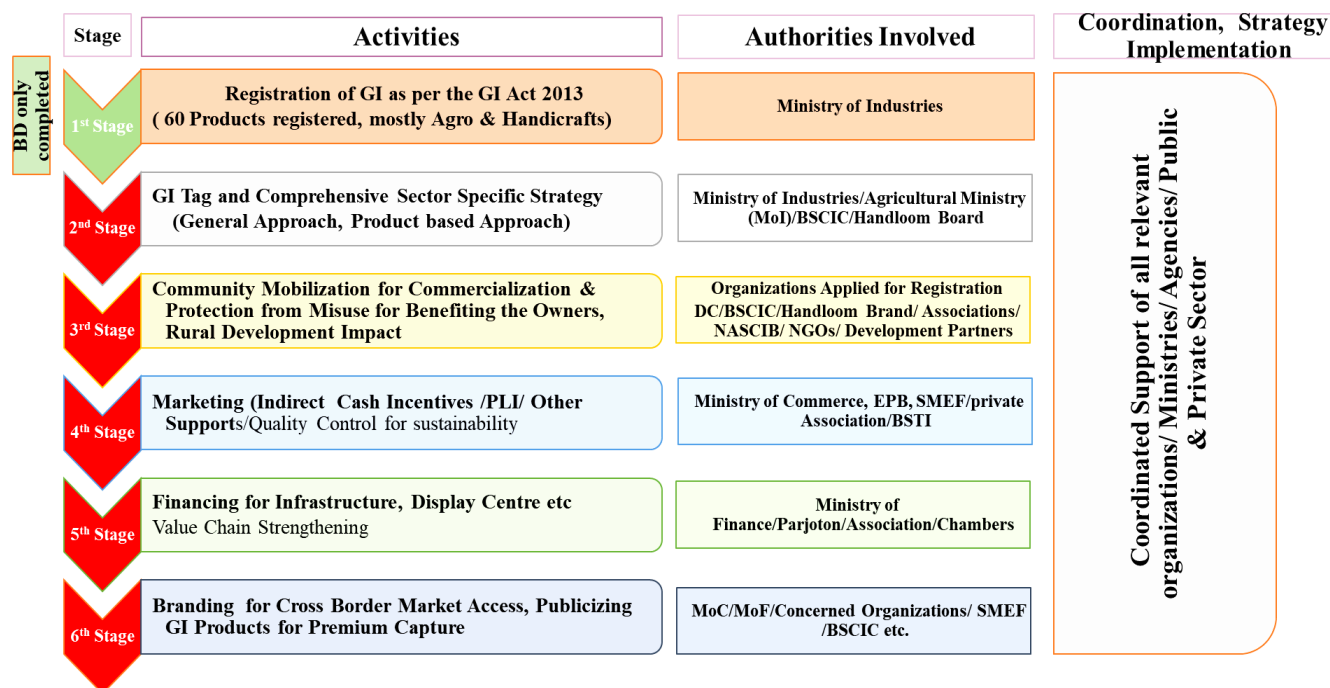
Exports in 2024-25 (in million USD)



So far we have not been able to utilize the benefits of GI for getting some premium prices from these products by investing for innovation preserving our tradition, institutional and policy support and export market positioning.

HS Code & Name	Exports in 24-25 (in million USD)
03028919: Hilsha fish	5.37
080450: Mangoes	0.37
50: Silk	0.07
030617: Other shrimps and prawns	238.19
1006: Rice	7.45
5303: Jute	148.48
0409: Natural honey	0.24
12119019: Agar wood chips	8.32
13023100: Agar-Agar	0.01
020450: Fresh, chilled or frozen goat meat	0.01
17: Sugar and sugar confectionery	20.82
4402: Wood charcoal (incl. agglomerated)	11.27
63: Other made up textile articles; sets; worn clothing and worn textile articles; rags (Considering 45%)	399.01
1703: Molasses resulting from the extraction or refining of sugar	0.82
<b>Total</b>	<b>840.42</b>

## Full Life Cycle of Enjoying the Benefits of GI– Bangladesh Completed Only One Stage



Bangladesh is in the initial stage of utilizing GI, only product discovery phase completed. Legal recognition through GI Tag, stakeholders mobilization, commercialization and market development phase have at the initial stage. Value chain development integrating all concerned are still underway. Coordination among concerned ministries, agencies for strategy preparation and implementation is needed.

## Business Initiative Leading Development (BUILD)



**One of the important features of GIs of Bangladesh is that, a number of GIs are shared with India as follows:**

No	Name of GIs Registered in Bangladesh	Name of GI Registered in India
1.	Jamalpur Nakshi Katha	Nakshi Katha of West Bengal
2.	Chapainawabgong Khirshapat Mango	Maldah Khirshapati Mango
3.	Rajshahi Chapainawabgong Fazli mango	Maldah Fazli Mango
4.	Dhakai Muslin	Bengal Muslin
5.	Jamdani saree	Upadha Jamdani
6.	Gopalgong's Rosogollah	Banglar Rosogollah
7.	Tangail Saree	Tangail Saree of Bengal
8.	Sundarban Honey	Sundarban Honey

***"Bangladesh's first GI, Jamdani is a flagship product and a cultural ambassador for the nation", India has got a GI in the name of Upadha Jamdani. A number of machine made Jamdani also a thread for this sector".***

#### EXAMPLE OF OTHER COUNTRIES

Country	Number of GIs	Employment	Economic Benefits & Context
<b>Bangladesh</b>	60	4.5 million	Export value is less despite similarities to other systems.
<b>India</b>	605	51,000 (only Darjeeling Tea)	GI promotion through Embassies.
<b>Vietnam</b>	1,869	33% of workforce	GIs contribute 12% of GDP.
<b>Japan</b>	169	~47,000 people (2021)	Contributed \$321.05 million; a key factor in rural economic revitalization.
<b>Italy</b>	6,330	890,000 people	Contributes \$19.79 billion (2019), with \$11.23 billion in export.
<b>China</b>	2,523 (Sui generis) + 7,385 (Trademark)	~20 million people (2020)	Contributed \$134.54 billion in 2023.
<b>Switzerland</b>	4,954	~17,000 people	GIs account for 60% of national export.

GI contributed significantly in other countries for creating employment and economic benefits, in Vietnam it is contributing about 12% of GDP. Italy utilizes the benefits most, it contributes \$19.79 billion (2019), with \$11.23 billion in export. In China about 20 million people is engaged contributing \$134.54 billion in 2023.

#### Cases of GI

**Hilsha Fish Registered in 2027:** Annual revenue USD 3B, contributing 1.15% to GDP & 12% of total fish production. Supports 450,000 direct and 2.5 million indirect livelihoods. Breeding season fishing ban, increased production by 92%: 299,000 MT (2008–09) → 571,000 MT (2023–24). Broader success attributed to multi-pronged strategy: conservation, livelihood diversification, coordinated government interventions, and effective value chain management.



**Jamdani Saree :** Jamdani Industrial Estate earns around BDT 30-32 crore per year, another BDT 5-6 crore coming from markets outside it. BSCIC anticipated sales of BDT 150-160 crore in Eid. Weavers received GI certificates with no guidance, training, or instructions



Weavers weekly income of around BDT 1,500, or BDT 5,000-7,000 per month, insufficient for livelihood. Local market is being flooded with cheaper, machine-made Indian Jamdani.

In 1997, a 25% cash incentive helped boost exports to \$19.694 million. Coordination gap among players" and a lack of a clear post-registration strategy, demonstrating that Jamdani GI registration remains a "paper GI".

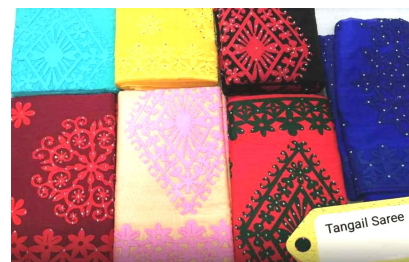


## Cases of Transborder GI conflict—Tangail Saree

India registered the “**Tangail Saree of Bengal**” as a GI (Jan 4, 2024). Bangladesh responded on February 6, 2024, officially registered the saree on April 25, 2024, but by then India had already secured the claim, enabling it to market the product internationally.

India’s application cited the migration of the Basak weaver family during partition but acknowledged Tangail, Bangladesh, as the product’s place of origin, giving Bangladesh a valid legal ground to challenge the registration under WTO TRIPS provisions (Articles 22.2–22.4) that prohibit misleading indications of origin and unfair competition. Bangladesh exports approximately 50,000 Tangail Sarees weekly to India (CPD). Potential economic loss for producers and weavers and weakening of Bangladesh’s cultural heritage claims internationally.

**Actions:** Monitor foreign GI registrations, especially in countries with shared cultural resources. Accede to the Lisbon Agreement and Geneva Act under WIPO for stronger international protection. Strengthen DPDT’s GI unit, inter-ministerial coordination, and legal capacity. This case demonstrates that without proactive and strategic GI protection, Bangladesh’s cultural assets can be claimed and commercialized by others, affecting both economic and heritage interests.



## Key Findings

<b>Trans-border Issues</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Issue:</b> Trans-border conflicts over 8 GIs (e.g., Jamdani, Muslin, Tangail Saree, Sundarbans Honey) with India.</li> <li>● <b>Risk:</b> Potential for conflicts and the development of "semi-generic" status, which devalues the products and invites unfair competition.</li> <li>● <b>Systemic Problem:</b> The Sui Generis system for national protection proves limiting in resolving homonymous or shared GIs.</li> </ul>
<b>Domestic Constraints &amp; Producer Concerns</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Institutional Weaknesses:</b> The current GI Act lacks strong enforcement, and there is a need for specialized units within the DPDT, better inter-ministerial coordination, and an official advisory council. A comprehensive national survey of potential GIs has not been conducted.</li> <li>● <b>Producer-Related Constraints:</b> Producers face significant challenges, including a lack of access to proper labs and testing facilities for quality standardization.</li> <li>● <b>Over-reliance on Incentives:</b> Producers, such as those in the Agar &amp; Atar sector, are highly dependent on cash incentives (reduced from 20% to 8%). There is a risk that if these incentives are discontinued, official exports will drop while informal exports increase.</li> <li>● <b>Lack of Lab Facilities:</b> A significant barrier to quality standardization and international market access is the absence of proper labs and testing facilities in Bangladesh.</li> </ul>
<b>Sustainability &amp; Market Impact</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Limited Producer Ownership:</b> 90% of GIs are registered by government organizations, while the private sector's involvement is minimal and weak (only 10%). This top-down approach raises concerns about long-term sustainability and market penetration.</li> <li>● <b>Low Market Impact:</b> The low producer involvement and lack of strong associations risk the GIs' market impact. Limited producer ownership can lead to a lack of genuine buy-in and a disconnect between the GI tag and real-world market benefits.</li> </ul>

## Key Challenges

- **Low Community Engagement:** Producers and local communities, who are the custodians of traditional knowledge, remain largely unaware of the benefits of GI registration. Limited participation has weakened ownership, quality assurance, and long-term sustainability. Without training, awareness campaigns, and organized producer groups, communities cannot fully leverage GI protection.
- **Weak Commercialization and Branding (No GI Tag in Use):** Despite several registrations, GI products from Bangladesh are not yet marketed internationally with the official GI tag. This reflects a failure in commercialization, branding, and international positioning. The absence of marketing strategies, export incentives, and brand-building campaigns has left GIs functioning as symbolic legal tools rather than drivers of trade and rural development.
- **Absence of a Strong GI Unit within DPDT:** The DPDT, which oversees GI registration, lacks a specialized, well-resourced unit to manage GIs. Without adequate technical expertise, enforcement capacity, and dedicated staff, the process is slow, fragmented, and reactive, leaving Bangladesh at a disadvantage compared to regional competitors.
- **Lack of Legal Support and Specialized Lawyers:** GI disputes, particularly with neighboring countries over trans-border products such as Tangail Saree, reveal the absence of specialized legal expertise. Bangladesh lacks trained lawyers in intellectual property and GI litigation, undermining its ability to defend national interests in both domestic and international forums.

- **Absence of Industry–Academia Collaboration:** Universities and research institutions have a wealth of expertise on agriculture, heritage products, and international trade law, but there is little structured collaboration with industries and government. This gap limits innovation, documentation of traditional knowledge, and evidence-based policymaking that could strengthen the GI system.
- **Absence of Financial Support for Producers:** Artisans, farmers, and producers involved in GI products often lack the capital to modernize production, meet international quality standards, or expand into global markets. Without financial incentives and credit facilities, many producers are unable to benefit from GI protection. Past experience with cash incentives (in sectors like textiles-Jamdani, Agar Attar) demonstrates that targeted financial support could improve competitiveness, but no such systematic mechanism exists for GI products.

## Recommendations

<b>1. Policy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Enact a comprehensive national GI policy with long-term goals and strategic priorities. Establish an official advisory council to guide GI initiatives.</li> <li>● Incorporate Collective Trademarks and Certification Marks into the Trademark Act to strengthen GI protection and utilization.</li> <li>● Approve a GI tag on an urgent basis and introduce a GI Tag User Policy alongside a sector-specific strategy to strengthen branding, expand market access, and maximize policy benefits for GI products.</li> </ul>
<b>2. Marketing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Develop a National Commercialization and Marketing Strategy to promote GI products.</li> <li>● Organize regional GI fairs and create official documentation to support local branding and sales.</li> <li>● Launch branding initiatives with support for lab and testing facilities, quality control, and R&amp;D.</li> </ul>
<b>3. Export Diversification</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Strategically select 5–10 GI products with high export potential and set specific export targets.</li> <li>● Implement robust certification and traceability systems to meet international standards.</li> </ul>
<b>4. Cross-Border Issues</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Proactively engage in diplomatic efforts to negotiate specific GI protection agreements with key trading partners and neighboring countries.</li> <li>● Establish a legal framework (bilateral agreement/FTA/PTA) for the management of trans-border GIs to prevent conflicts and the risk of products becoming "semi-generic."</li> </ul>
<b>5. R&amp;D</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Conduct a national survey to identify and prioritize potential GI products across all sectors.</li> <li>● Prioritize R&amp;D support to improve product quality and enhance the uniqueness of GI products.</li> <li>● Secure accreditation from recognized certification authorities in key importing countries to strengthen the credibility of Bangladesh's registered GI products and enhance their export potential in high-value international markets.</li> </ul>
<b>6. Financing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Extend the CMSME Refinancing Scheme 2025 of Bangladesh Bank to agro-based GI products to provide low-cost financing specially to Women Entrepreneurs.</li> </ul>
<b>7. Awareness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Launch comprehensive awareness campaigns to educate producers, consumers, and officials about the benefits and importance of GIs.</li> <li>● Enforce the use of the official GI tag with improved packaging to establish it as a mark of authenticity.</li> </ul>

## GI PRODUCTS



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