



# BUILDING A HUMBOLDT CANNABIS BRAND

LESSONS FROM GLOBAL GEOGRAPHIC INDICATIONS



# WHO WE ARE

Humboldt County Growers Alliance (HCGA) is a trade association composed of licensed cannabis businesses in Humboldt County

**HCGA's mission is to preserve, protect and enhance Humboldt County's world-renowned cannabis industry**

# HCGA Members

36Works	Grouse Mountain Green	Lost Coast Lady Farms	The Honeydew Creek Original Farm	Eight Mad Farmers	Humboldt Highline	Ridgeline Farms
8-Mile Family Farms	Grouse Valley Farms	Lost Creek Family Farms	The Humboldt Campus	Elk Ridge Holistics	Humboldt Hygrow & Riverbar Pharms	Riverview Gardens
ABC Farms	Hanging Gardens Inc.	Lucy Gulch	The Humboldt Cure	Emerald County Statewide	Humboldt Kine Farms	Rockaway Investments
Aged Vineyards	Happy Heads Ranch	Madrone Farms	The Humboldt Manufacturing Co.	Emerald Dragonfly Farms	Humboldt Medicine Man	Rolling Acres Organics
Alchemy Atelier	Hawk Valley farms	Mama Bear Farms	The Original Mom & Pops	Emerald Family Farms	Humboldt Organics	Rustic Farms
Alderpoint Road Holdings	Headwaters	Mamba Humboldt Logistics	The SuperDope Company	Emerald Healing Humboldt	Humboldt Patient Resource Center	Safier Family Farms
Aloha Humboldt	Heart of Humboldt	MannaWell	The Winterland Farm	Emerald Mountain Farm	Humboldt Redwood Healing	Salmon Creek Farm
Alpenglow Farms	Heartstone Farms	Mateel Botanicals	Three Creeks Farms	Emerald Queen Farms	Humboldt Royale	Satori Wellness
Altum Mind	Hendrx Farms	Mattole 1	Tranquility Lane Farms	Emerald Triangle Collective	Humboldt Seed Company	Schackow Farms
Amaranth Farms	Herbi	Mattole Valley Organics	Tranquility Lane Growery	Empress Farms	Humboldt Synchronicitrees	Scrap Acres
Apotheca Farms	Hidden Prairie Farms	Medicine Wheel Farm	Tree Frog Botanicals	Enchanted Earth	Humboldt Trees	Seal Camp Farms of Humboldt
Ascension Farms	Higher Ground Agriculture	Mermaid Spring Estates	Trusty Transportation	Evio Labs	Humboldt.Farm	Sensi Vally Farms
Barrett Farms	Hiller Cultivators	MOCA Humboldt	UpNorth Distribution	Exotic Flavorz	HumCo Traditions	Seventh Wave
Barter Mountain Roots	Hilltop Farm Humboldt	Moon and Stars Farm	Villa Paradiso Farms	Fallen Oak Farm	HuMMari Farms	Simple Solutions/Big Sur Extracts
Bear Extraction House	Honeydew This	Moontime Medicinals	Vital Herb Farms	Flor De Vida	Humming Bud Farms	Sisu Extracts
Big Leaf Ranch	Honeydew Valley Farms	Mountainwise Farms	West End Farms	Flow Kana	Ice Box Flat Farms	Sky High Humboldt
Bigfoot Xing	House of Jade	Mr Beans Veganix	West End Organics	Flower Co.	Innovation Pacific Corp	Skyfall Family Farm
Black Bear Farms	Huckleberry Hill Farms	Music Mountain Farms, LLC	West of West	Forbidden Fruit Farms	J and R Ranch	Skyline Farms
Born Thorn, Inc.	HumBee	Mystic Mountain Farms	Whithorn Valley Farm	Forever Honeydew Farms	Juniper Grown	SoHum Royal Cannabis
Cache Farms	Humboldt 36 Farms	NASHA	Wild River Farms	Forever Loving Humboldt	Kalifornia Green Akres	Sohum Sown
CaliSun Farms	Humboldt AF Cannabis	Native Humboldt Farms	Wild West Herbs	Fresh Off the Hill	King Range and Co.	Sol Spirit Farm
Campus Humboldt	Humboldt Alchemy Group	Nature's Jar	Wildseed Oil	Full Cup Farmstead	Kings View Farms, LLC	Source Nursery
Canna country farm	Humboldt Apothecary	Navaya	Willow Creekside Farms	Full Moon Farms	Kiskanu	Space Gem Candy
CARE Cooperative	Humboldt Bay Organics	Nielson Ranch Farms	Windy Gap	Full Sun Farm	Klamath Sky	Stoney Bottom Farms
Carlotta Gardens	Humboldt Boutique Gardens	Northern Emeralds	Wolfpack Labs of Heli Biotech	Gangery	Kuda Cannabis	Strain Theory
CASA Humboldt	Humboldt Brand Cannabis Company	OG Distro	Woody Ridge Farms	Golden Gardens	Kurdish Cannabis	Sugarleaf Holdings
Chamise Creek Farms	Humboldt Brothers	Old Goat Farms		Grade A Farm	Kushla Life Sciences	Summit Sungrown
Cherry Valley Farms	Humboldt Bud Company	Omni Security		Graham's Brand	Lady Sativa Farm	Sun Green Farms
Chronic Creek Farms	Humboldt Cheeba Works	One Log House		Gravel Spur Farm	Ladybug Herbal Sanctuary	Sun Growers Guild/True Humboldt
Clear Water Farms	Humboldt Craft Farms	Orchid Essentials		Green Acres Farm	Litica Laboratories	Sunborn
Cloudhands Farm	Humboldt Distribution Company	Organnabliss Farms		Green Ox / Humboldt	LIV Emerald	Sungold Flat
Coastal Praire	Humboldt Edge Farm	Papa & Barkley		Homegrown	Live Oak Meadows	Sunnabis: Humboldt's Full Sun Farms
Countyline Ranch	Humboldt Family Farms	Paradise Mountain		Green Truth Gardens	Long Creek Ranch	Sunnyside Farms
Coyote Ridge Farms	Humboldt First	Patterson Flat Farm		Greenwood Farmz	Lost Coast Botanical	Sunrise Mountain Farms
Crossland Management	Humboldt Green Light Kitchen	Peak Industries			Lost Coast Cannabis	Swayback Ridge Farms
CW Analytical	Humboldt Green Tree Farms	Perissos Enterprises				Tan Oak Farms
Deep Roots Farm	Humboldt Grove	Permanent Holiday				Ten Redwoods
DewPoint	Humboldt Growers Network	Point Bay Distribution				The Ganjery
Dinosaur Valley Farms	Humboldt Harvest	Power Flower Farm				The Homestead Collective Weed Company
Dobbyn Creek Cannabis Farm	Humboldt Harvest Moon Farms	Proper Wellness				
Dr. GreenThumb's Humboldt	Humboldt Herb Star Farms	Proxima Investments				
Dry Creek Gardens		Pushr LA				
East Mill Creek Farms		Quantum Genetics				
Eden Farms		Redwood Roots Family				
Eel River Organics		Reed Mountain Pharms				

# HCGA BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Scott Davies  
Winterbourne Farm, Honeydew



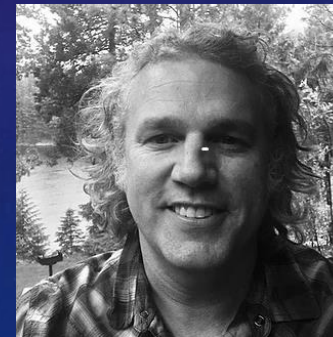
Stacia Eliason  
Peach Tree and Cedar Creek Farms, Willow Creek  
Bear Extraction House, Arcata



Kaylie Saxon  
Forbidden Fruit Farms, Harris



Aaron Lieberman  
Paradise Mountain Farm, Briceland



Scott Vasterling  
Humboldt Family Farm, Dinsmore



# A VISION FOR LEGALIZATION

- Thousands of small, independent businesses
- Fair value returned to producers
- Environmentally sustainable and regenerative production
- Ending the criminalization and stigma of cannabis
- Businesses embedded in their community
- Consumer recognition for craft cannabis



• *“America’s farmlands are some of the most productive in the world, thanks in no small part to technology and the existence of scale sufficient to leverage that technology. Even what Americans think of as a small family farm is quite large compared with an illicit marijuana operation. There are no amber waves of cannabis anywhere in the world today, but under a true legalization regime there would be... Joints would be about as cheap as things that are often treated as free. Splenda packets, for example, cost 2 or 3 cents each when purchased in bulk.”*

-Matthew Yglesias, 2012



# WHY GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATIONS?

- Holistic strategy for sustainable rural economic development
- Promotes unique, differentiated products tied to land, culture, and climate
- Returns value to producers and prevents capture of supply chain
- Promotes environmental sustainability and benefit to the community

Most importantly: they work



# MARKETING ASSESSMENT ADVISORS



Massimo Vittori,  
Managing Director,  
oriGIn, Geneva,  
Switzerland



Camron King, Oakwood Strategic,  
former Executive Director of the  
Lodi Winegrape Commission



Genine Coleman, Executive  
Director of Origins Council, co-  
founder of Mendocino  
Appellations Project

# WHAT DO SUCCESSFUL GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATIONS HAVE IN COMMON?

1. Strong organizational and institutional structures.
2. Equitable participation.
3. Effective legal protection.
4. Strong market partners.
5. Grading and quality control.
6. Collective data collection, research, and educational programs.
7. Promotion of environmental sustainability.
8. Integration with public policy expertise.

# STRONG ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES

- Long-term
- Resilient
- Representative
- Partnership with government
- Capacity to implement strategies including differentiation, IP protection, and promotion

CIVB  
BORDEAUX



napa valley vintners





## FNC: a democratic organization

Through democratic elections, Colombia's coffee growers choose their representatives to the different instances of the organization.



The Coffee Growers' National Congress elects FNC's CEO, and authorizes him to represent the interests of Colombian Coffee Growers.

# EQUITABLE PARTICIPATION

*“When the GIs are controlled by only one part of the chain, i.e. exporters, or the local elite, they may be more business-minded in furthering the GI's commercial success but they also may not offer much to producers, unless producers have a position of power, as they do, for example, in the Colombian case study. In some cases, capture by the elite can diminish the effectiveness and potentially put the original assets of the GI at risk... Ownership of the legal designation is typically held by the government in trust for the stakeholders of the region and most successful GIs are managed by representative stakeholder associations.”*

-International Trade Centre. Guide to geographical indications: Linking products and their origins



# STRONG MARKET PARTNERSHIPS

**Principle:**

Less-resourced producers depend more on strong market partners, tourism, and press

Better-resourced producers can engage afford to engage in direct consumer advertising

Key potential partners: retailers, distributors, equity businesses

# IP PROTECTION

• *“A strong domestic GI protection system is essential... A number of the more successful GIs report having spent hundreds of thousands of dollars each year to defend themselves. These expenses cover the ongoing monitoring, updating, and enforcement or conflict resolution in all relevant markets. That is in addition to the initial establishment costs. A viable protection strategy usually begins with a strong domestic GI system that reduces the likelihood of internal fraud (within the origin) that could compromise the reputation and, in some cases, the validity of legal protection overseas.”*

• -International Trade Centre. Guide to geographical indications: Linking products and their origins



# DEFINING AND CONTROLLING QUALITY

- Relying on reputation alone can be dangerous
- Grading systems and classifications play a key role in determining value
- Research and development
- Minimum quality standards
- What is quality cannabis?
- Role of appellations



**Kona Extra Fancy**

*16 oz Whole Bean Coffee*

Coastal Park Place  
714-855-8830

Westland Mall  
734-425-1125



# Thank You!

Hans Schultz  
Geisenheim University



Gregory V. Jones  
Environmental Science and



BELL HARBOR  
INTERNATIONAL

# DATA COLLECTION, RESEARCH, AND EDUCATION



# PROMOTING ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

- Promote stringent existing environmental baselines
- Promote sustainable and regenerative cultivation methods
- Carefully consider additional environmental certifications
- Keep it local





# PUBLIC POLICY

- How will policy dynamics will affect the California market?
- How will policy dynamics affect the availability and nature of interstate markets?
- IP protection strategy?
- Consider the potential impact of programmatic marketing activities on state, local, and international cannabis policy developments.

## Summary of GI Case Studies

	Colombia	Kona	Bordeaux	Napa
<b>Management of GI</b>	NFC partnership with the Colombian federal government.	Primarily Hawaii Department of Agriculture (HDOA), with support from the KCFA and other trade groups.	CIVB, syndicats, and INAO, with support from the French and EU governments.	Primarily Napa Valley Vintners, with support from state and federal governments via labeling and AVA standards.
<b>Quality Control</b>	Minimum quality standards, agricultural practices, and coffee varieties are required.	Grading standards are established by HDOA; coffee must meet minimum standards.	Wines must meet appellation production standards and be approved by INAO tasting committee and third party accredited control body.	85% of grapes must be sourced from Napa; informal quality control standards; research.
<b>IP Protection</b>	Colombia coffee and Juan Valdez are protected in Colombia as a denomination de origen, in the U.S. by certification mark, and as a GI in the EU.	Hawaii state law requires that "Kona blends" must contain at least 10% Kona. 100% Kona coffee is protected by federal certification mark.	Bordeaux and 57 sub-appellations are protected by the EU. International IP is protected on case-by-case basis and in EU bilateral treaties.	Recognized as an AVA in the U.S., and protected by an additional certification mark. GI protection in the EU and other countries.
<b>Industry - facing marketing</b>	NFC is large enough to act as a major distributor in itself, while also partnering with major processors, distributors, and retailers (e.g. Starbucks).	High-impact partnerships with large coffee distributors.	Global wine fairs, festivals, and futures-buying events that largely target distributors. Partnerships with restaurants.	Industry auctions, B2B, events, research and strategic partnerships.
<b>Consumer - facing advertising</b>	Juan Valdez direct consumer advertising campaign.	Limited.	Public wine fairs, wine schools, direct consumer advertising.	Educational programs for consumers, tourism.
<b>Tourism</b>	Emphasis is on export rather than tourism, but coffee marketing has helped drive tourism and improve the national image.	Heavily dependent on farm tours. Tourism is administered as one aspect of the larger Hawaii agritourism sector.	Chateaux tours focus on building connection to land and culture rather than direct sales. Some regions invest more heavily in tourism with events and public infrastructure.	Strategic partnership with tourism industry, heavily invested in regional experience including wine tasting rooms, food pairing and restaurants and events.
<b>Environmental certification</b>	Collective NFC investment in Rainforest Alliance certification. Several other certifications are also available.	No systematic efforts identified.	CIVB has set a goal for 100% of producers to become environmentally certified, and funds research to help support transitions towards certification.	NVV has sponsored and promoted the Napa Green certification, which now enrolls 80% of producers.
<b>Sub - appellations</b>	Includes terroir-based appellations such as Café Narino.	N/A	57 sub-appellations are promoted in cooperation with Bordeaux as a whole	16 sub-appellations are promoted in cooperation with Napa Valley as a whole
<b>Production / distribution relationship</b>	NFC and 38 cooperatives serve as farmer-controlled processing and distribution.	Cooperatives have historically sought to vertically integrate where possible. Partnership with large distributors is key to export marketing strategy.	Close but contentious relationship is mediated through the CIVB. Wine fairs are a key point of contact.	Independent distribution required by three-tiered system, with exceptions for on-site sales and state-by-state shipping agreements.
<b>Major marketing activities</b>	Juan Valdez campaign, direct-to-consumer advertising, industry-facing marketing through centralized NFC distribution.	Partnership with large distributors, tourism, direct farm sales.	B2B wine fairs and festivals, tourism, wine schools, direct consumer advertising, building direct relationships with restaurants and specialty wine retailers.	Auctions, tours and educational events targeted at journalists/industry/restaurants, partnership with luxury brands, research and development.

### **Recommendations For Organizational Structure and Equitable Participation**

Recommendation #1: Humboldt's cannabis marketing program should be built on a strong institutional foundation that prioritizes long-term strategic vision over short-term sales.

Recommendation #2: Collaboration between industry and government should be the foundation of Humboldt's cannabis marketing program.

Recommendation #3: A marketing program will benefit from strong ties to community organizations beyond industry and government.

Recommendation #4: The organizational and decision-making structure that determines marketing efforts should be representative of, and accountable to, the Humboldt cannabis industry.

Recommendation #5: The organization that receives Humboldt County marketing funds should be held accountable to public oversight. Specifically, we recommend establishing a single County committee tasked with review for all tax-funded countywide promotional efforts.

Recommendation #6: Humboldt manufacturers, distributors, and retailers should contribute proportionally to collective marketing efforts.

Recommendation #7: Marketing efforts should build close relationships with appellations and cooperatives as they develop.

Recommendation #8: Messaging should be developed with substantial community input and reflect community values.

### **Recommendations to Protect Collective IP**

Recommendation #9: Consider adopting a countywide stamp program, including a certification mark, once this resource becomes available.

Recommendation #10: IP for the Humboldt County cannabis marketing program should be held by local government.

Recommendation #11: A Humboldt cannabis marketing organization should have capacity to develop and enforce an IP strategy, including registration of marks, enforcement against fraudulent uses, and integration with IP-related public policy issues.

### **Recommendations for Specific Marketing Efforts**

Recommendation #12: Marketing efforts should prioritize building relationships with distributors and retailers in major urban markets.

Recommendation #13: Marketing efforts should prioritize building relationships with equity businesses.

Recommendation #14: Marketing efforts should work to influence market dynamics, not only to maximize sales within existing market dynamics.

Recommendation #15: Programmatic marketing efforts should carefully consider prioritization of resources.

Recommendation #16: Marketing efforts should promote Humboldt and its sub-regions through a lens of terroir.

Recommendation #17: Incorporate public relations and media coverage into countywide marketing efforts.

Recommendation #18: Marketing efforts should promote emergent cannabis tourism and coordinate with existing tourism promotion programs on joint content marketing efforts.

### **Recommendations for Quality Control**

Recommendation #19: Track the development of cannabis grading standards over time, and consider promotional efforts related to the development and implementation of standards.

Recommendation #20: Consider conducting agricultural and consumer research on cannabis quality and grading standards.

Recommendation #21: Over a long term horizon, consider the adoption of minimum quality standards or quality-based classification for cannabis labeled with the Humboldt name. Any potential minimum standards should be based around thorough stakeholder- driven process and a high degree of substantiated industry consensus.

Recommendation #22: Collaborate with appellations on the marketing of appellation quality control standards, and other appellation-related programs.

Recommendation #23: As appropriate, consider using Measure S funds - such as microgrant funds - to support cooperatively-owned processing and distribution.

### **Recommendations for Public Policy**

Recommendation #24: A Humboldt cannabis marketing program should integrate public policy expertise on issues including: how policy dynamics will affect the California market, how policy dynamics will affect the availability and nature of interstate markets, development of an IP protection strategy, and policy and compliance considerations related to legal restrictions on cannabis marketing.

Recommendation #25: Marketing efforts should consider the potential impact of programmatic marketing activities on state, local, and international cannabis policy developments.

### **Recommendations for Research and Education**

Recommendation #26: Consider conducting research on consumer trends, quality control, agricultural practices, etc. and making this research available to all Humboldt cannabis businesses.

Recommendation #27: A Humboldt cannabis marketing organization should make relevant educational materials available to all Humboldt cannabis businesses.

### **Recommendations for Promoting Environmental Sustainability**

Recommendation #28: Marketing efforts should promote existing baselines for environmental sustainability in Humboldt, including sun-grown production methods, stringent environmental regulation through multiple state and local agencies, and the prohibition on the use of pesticides.

Recommendation #29: Marketing efforts should collaborate with appellation regions to promote cannabis grown with higher voluntary environmental standards, including regenerative and permaculture methods.

Recommendation #30: Marketing efforts should consider promoting additional environmental certifications only if such certification standards are sound, can be adequately promoted to consumers, and will be widely adopted by producers.

# KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Geographical indications are a holistic strategy for sustainable rural development based around building a regional brand identity for unique, specialty products essentially tied to that region
- Strong organizational structures with equitable and representative decision making are critical to regional branding projects.
- Marketing is not just (or primarily) advertising. Differentiation, industry partnerships, public relations, IP protection, and other integrated factors are critical.
- “Communities that come together in crises, rather than dividing into self-interested factions, can overcome the severity of the situation and emerge better equipped to handle the next one.”



THANK YOU!