
MANAGEMENT OF THE KRONG ANA RICE CERTIFICATION MARK IN THE CONTEXT OF VIETNAM'S TWO-TIER LOCAL GOVERNMENT SYSTEM: CURRENT STATUS AND PROPOSED GOVERNANCE MODEL

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ABSTRACT

The Krong Ana Rice Certification Mark is an important intellectual property asset that contributes to enhancing product value and promoting the development of the rice sector in Dak Lak Province. However, the implementation of the two-tier local government system from July 1, 2025, has significantly altered the management structure of the certification mark, as the district-level authority that previously served as the managing entity no longer exists. This study aims to analyze the current management status of the Krong Ana Rice Certification Mark under the new administrative framework, identify emerging governance gaps, and propose an appropriate management model. The study employs document analysis, semi-structured interviews, and expert consultations involving 46 stakeholders, including local government officials, cooperatives, enterprises, rice-producing households, and experts from three communes within the Krong Ana rice production area. The findings indicate that while the administrative restructuring has not affected the legal validity of the certification mark, it has created several governance challenges, including the absence of a unified coordination mechanism across the production area, difficulties in granting and supervising the use of the certification mark, limitations in quality control, and weak inter-communal coordination. Based on these findings, the study proposes an inter-communal management model organized around production areas and value chains to ensure the effective utilization and sustainable development of the Krong Ana Rice Certification Mark within the new local government structure.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the context of promoting value-added and sustainable agricultural development, intellectual property (IP) has increasingly been recognized as an important instrument for protecting the reputation, quality, and geographical origin of local specialty products. Among various forms of IP protection, certification marks (CMs) are widely applied to agricultural products associated with specific geographical areas, contributing to consumer confidence,

enhancing commercial value, and fostering rural economic development [1]. IP tools such as CMs, collective marks (CoMs), and geographical indications (GIs) not only improve the market competitiveness of agricultural products but also help preserve indigenous knowledge, strengthen linkages among stakeholders within value chains, and promote local agricultural development [2].

In recent years, the management and utilization of IP assets in the agricultural sector have attracted increasing attention from both domestic and international scholars. The first stream of research has focused on the role of IP instruments in enhancing the value of local agricultural products and expanding market opportunities. [3] argued that the success of protected products depends not only on product quality but also on the organizational capacity and collective governance of stakeholders within the production region. Similarly, [2] emphasized that effective management mechanisms and quality control systems are essential for maintaining the reputation and value of IP-protected agricultural products.

A second stream of research has examined the governance of CMs, CoMs, and GIs at the local level. Studies in Vietnam indicate that the establishment and exploitation of local IP assets have contributed significantly to product value enhancement, income generation for producers, and rural economic development [4]. However, existing studies have largely concentrated on branding strategies, market development, production organization, or the economic performance of protected products, while relatively little attention has been paid to governance models and institutional arrangements for IP management in the context of administrative and institutional reforms.

Krong Ana rice is one of the signature agricultural products of Đak Lak Province and has been protected under CM Registration No. 331762, granted by the Intellectual Property Office of Vietnam (IP Viet Nam) in [5]. Prior to 1 July 2025, the People's Committee of Krong Ana District served as the owner of the CM and was responsible for authorizing its use, monitoring product quality, and supervising the exploitation and development of the mark. Under this governance framework, the CM played an important role in enhancing the commercial value of Krong Ana rice, promoting local branding, and facilitating participation by producers and businesses in the certified rice value chain.

However, the implementation of Vietnam's administrative restructuring policy and the transition to a two-tier local government model, pursuant to Resolution No. 1660/NQ-UBTVQH15 [6] of the Standing Committee of the National Assembly, has substantially altered the local governance structure. Following the dissolution of the district-level administration, the production area of Krong Ana rice has been divided among three newly established commune-level administrative units: Krong Ana, Dur Kmal, and Ea Na. This institutional change has created new challenges concerning governance responsibility, inter-communal coordination, product quality control, and the management and utilization of the CM.

Although a considerable body of literature has examined the management and development of IP assets in agriculture, little attention has been devoted to the implications of administrative restructuring for the governance of CMs associated with geographical products. In particular, under Vietnam's newly implemented two-tier local government model, changes in ownership arrangements and coordination mechanisms for CMs previously managed by district-level authorities remain underexplored from both theoretical and practical perspectives. This research gap constitutes the primary focus of the present study.

Against this background, this study aims to analyze the current management of the Krong Ana Rice CM under the two-tier local government system; identify governance gaps arising from the dissolution of district-level administration; and propose an appropriate governance model based on inter-communal coordination, production-region management, and value chain integration to ensure the effective utilization and sustainable development of the CM. The findings not only provide empirical evidence from the case of Krong Ana rice but also offer policy implications for improving the governance of CMs, CoMs, and GIs in localities undergoing administrative restructuring in Vietnam.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Analytical framework and data collection methods

This study is based on an analytical framework that examines the impact of the transition to a two-tier local government model on the governance of CMs. The analysis is structured around four interrelated components: (i) assessing the management of the Krong Ana Rice CM prior to the implementation of the two-tier local government model; (ii) evaluating changes in governance structures and coordination mechanisms following the administrative restructuring; (iii) identifying institutional gaps and governance challenges arising in the management, utilization, and development of the CM; and (iv) proposing an appropriate governance model based on inter-communal coordination, production-region management, and value chain integration to ensure the effective utilization and sustainable development of the Krong Ana Rice CM (Figure 1).

The analytical framework is grounded in a governance transition perspective, which posits that changes in administrative organization may alter governance actors, coordination mechanisms, and the implementation of management functions related to public IP assets. Accordingly, the study extends beyond describing the existing management system to examine how administrative reform influences governance effectiveness and to identify institutional arrangements that are better suited to the new administrative context.

The study employs a combination of secondary and primary data sources. Secondary data were collected from legal documents, specialized publications, and official reports issued by relevant government agencies concerning the management of the Krong Ana Rice CM during the 2024–2026 period.

Primary data were collected in April 2026 through semi-structured interviews and expert consultations. The respondents included leaders of commune-level People's Committees, technical officers, representatives of agricultural cooperatives, business enterprises, farming households, and experts in IP, public administration, and agricultural development. The interviews focused on assessing the management of the CM before and after the implementation of the two-tier local government model, identifying challenges and governance gaps in coordination, management, and utilization, and gathering stakeholders' perspectives on the development of an appropriate governance model under the new administrative framework.

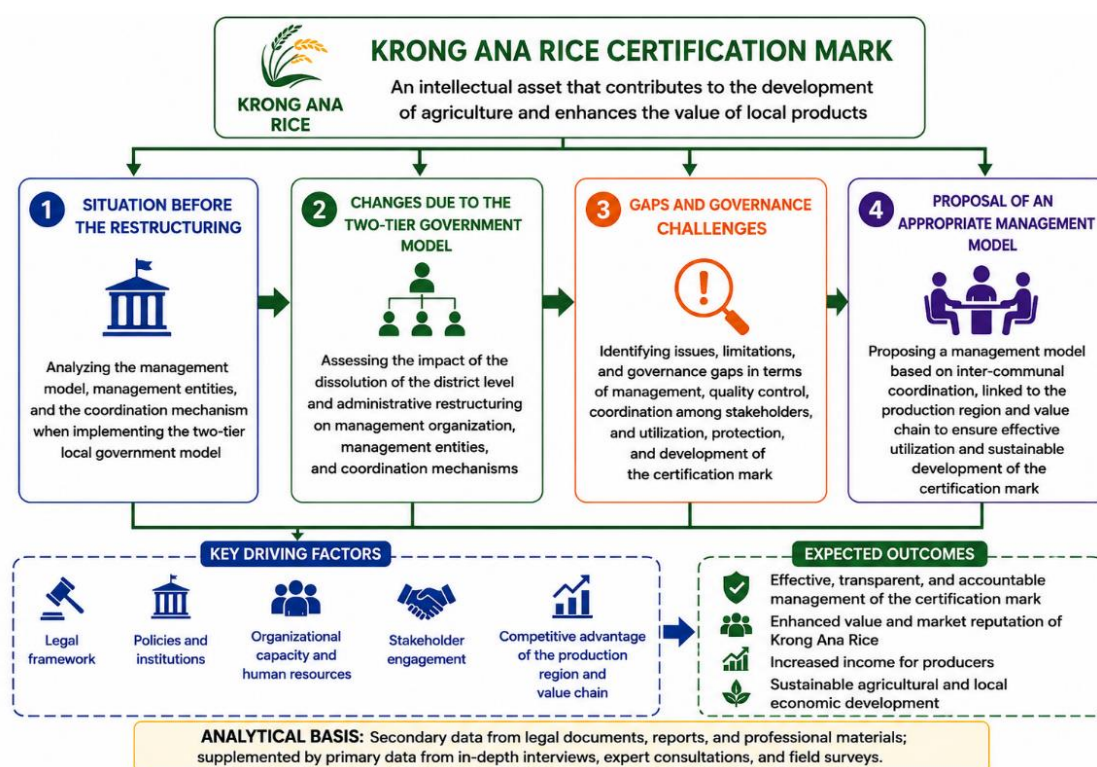


Figure 1. Analytical framework for assessing the impact of the two-tier local government model on the management of Krong Ana Rice CM

2.2. Study area and sample selection

The study was conducted in three newly established communes located within the production region covered by the Krong Ana Rice CM, namely Krong Ana, Dur Kmal, and Ea Na Communes. Following the administrative restructuring, these communes collectively encompass the entire production area associated with the CM and are therefore directly involved in its governance and management.

Research participants were selected using purposive sampling, a widely adopted approach in qualitative research that enables the deliberate selection of informants with relevant knowledge, expertise, and practical experience related to the research topic [7]. This sampling strategy ensured that the collected information adequately reflected the perspectives

of key stakeholders involved in the management, utilization, and development of the Krong Ana Rice CM.

A total of 46 respondents participated in the study, including leaders of commune-level People's Committees, technical officers, representatives of agricultural cooperatives, rice trading enterprises, farming households, and experts in IP and agricultural development (Table 1).

Table 1. Characteristics of interview participants

No.	Participant Group	Number of Participants	Information Collected
1	Leaders of commune-level People's Committees	3	Assessment of the management of Krong Ana Rice CM following the implementation of the two-tier local government model; inter-communal coordination mechanisms; and future governance arrangements.
2	Commune-level technical officers	6	Management, coordination, inspection, and supervision of CM use; challenges encountered in performing management functions after the dissolution of district-level administration.
3	Agricultural cooperatives	4	Registration and use of the CM; opportunities and challenges related to information access, quality control, and market linkages under the new governance structure.
4	Rice enterprises and business establishments	13	Demand for CM utilization; requirements for product quality and traceability; and perceptions of the impacts of governance changes on production, marketing, and commercialization activities.
5	Rice farming households	15	Awareness of the role of the CM; participation in the rice value chain; and challenges in accessing, using, and complying with CM regulations.
6	Experts and provincial-level government officials	5	Assessment of institutional and governance gaps arising from administrative restructuring; recommendations for a governance model based on production regions and value chain integration.
Total		46	

Source: Authors' field survey, April 2026.

2.3. Data analysis

This study employed document analysis to systematically examine legal documents, regulatory frameworks, and other relevant materials concerning the governance of Krong Ana Rice CM before and after the implementation of the two-tier local government model.

For the qualitative data, content analysis was applied to organize, code, and interpret information according to six thematic categories: governance authority, coordination mechanisms, authorization of CM use, quality control, traceability, and governance model improvement. Content analysis is widely recognized as an appropriate method for identifying patterns, themes, and emerging issues from qualitative data [8].

In addition, descriptive statistics were used to summarize key information on rice cultivation area, production output, the number of organizations authorized to use the CM, and inspection and monitoring activities. A comparative analysis was conducted to examine differences in governance arrangements before and after the implementation of the two-tier local government model, thereby identifying institutional gaps and informing the development of an appropriate governance model.

To enhance the reliability and credibility of the findings, information obtained from interviews was triangulated with secondary data sources and relevant policy and administrative documents in accordance with the principle of data triangulation [9].

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Current status of the development and governance of Krong Ana Rice Certification Mark

The Krong Ana Rice CM was granted Certificate of Registration No. 331762 by the IP Viet Nam in 2019, with the People's Committee of Krong Ana District, Dak Lak Province, designated as its owner. The CM was established to protect the reputation, geographical origin, and distinctive quality of rice produced within the Krong Ana production region, thereby enhancing product value and strengthening its market competitiveness.

By the end of 2025, the production area covered by the Krong Ana Rice CM was distributed across three communes, Krong Ana, Dur Kmal, and Ea Na, with a total rice cultivation area of 7,988.87 hectares and an annual production of approximately 79,152.60 tons. At the time of this study, four organizations and individuals had been authorized to use the CM, comprising two agricultural cooperatives, one enterprise, and one business household.

Table 2. Rice cultivation area and production by commune following administrative restructuring

Administrative Unit	Rice Cultivation Area (ha)	Percentage (%)	Annual Rice Production (tons)
Krong Ana Commune	4.263,27	53,37	41.431,90
Ea Na Commune	2.003,70	25,08	19.895,30
Dur Kmal Commune	1.721,90	21,55	17.825,40
Total	7.988,87	100,00	79.152,60

Source: Compiled by the authors based on data provided by the People's Committees of Krong Ana, Dur Kmal, and Ea Na Communes ([10], [11], [12]).

The interview findings indicate that the Krong Ana Rice CM has made a significant contribution to enhancing the commercial value of the product. At the time of the study, certified Krong Ana rice was sold at retail prices ranging from VND 30,000 to 40,000 per kilogram, whereas comparable rice products without the CM were priced between VND 20,000 and 25,000 per kilogram. This represents a price premium of approximately 40 - 60%, highlighting the role of the CM in creating added value and strengthening consumer confidence in the marketplace.

These findings suggest that the CM serves not only as an instrument for IP protection but also as an effective mechanism for generating economic value and improving the competitiveness of producers and businesses participating in the Krong Ana rice value chain.

The observed price premium is consistent with previous studies suggesting that certification-based IP instruments can enhance product differentiation, increase consumer trust, and improve market performance for geographically linked agricultural products.

Table 3. Comparison of retail prices between certified and non-certified Krong Ana Rice

Indicator	Certified Krong Ana Rice	Non-certified Rice
Retail price (VND/kg)	30,000 - 40,000	20,000 - 25,000

Source: Authors' field survey, April 2026.

Before the implementation of the two-tier local government model, the governance of the Krong Ana Rice CM was relatively centralized under the coordination of People's Committee of Krong Ana District. Key management functions, including the authorization of CM use, product quality inspection, supervision of mark utilization, and trade promotion activities, were administered through the district's specialized agencies. During the 2024–2025 period, monitoring and inspection activities were conducted on a regular basis, comprising three inspections in 2024 and four inspections in 2025, with no violations of the CM regulations detected.

Overall, this governance model contributed to maintaining consistency in the management of the production region and ensuring effective quality control of certified products. However, because the system was largely organized around the district-level administrative structure, it became vulnerable to the institutional changes introduced by the administrative restructuring and the transition to the two-tier local government model.

3.2. Impacts of the two-tier local government model on the governance of the certification mark

Following the implementation of Resolution No. 1660/NQ-UBTVQH15, the production region covered by the Krong Ana Rice CM was reorganized into three newly established communes: Krong Ana, Dur Kmal, and Ea Na. Although the geographical production area and the distinctive natural characteristics of the product remained unchanged, the administrative governance structure underwent substantial transformation.

Prior to this institutional reform, the People's Committee of Krong Ana District served both as the owner of the CM and as the central authority responsible for coordinating key governance functions, including the authorization of CM use, quality control, inspection and supervision, and trade promotion. With the implementation of the two-tier local government model, however, the district-level administration was dissolved, while the production region and authorized users of the CM became distributed across multiple commune-level administrative units. This transition fundamentally altered the previous centralized governance arrangement and created the need for a more appropriate and adaptive governance model.

The interview findings indicate that stakeholders consistently emphasized the importance of maintaining a unified governance mechanism for the CM. For example, a representative of an agricultural cooperative noted that the absence of a single coordinating authority after the administrative reform has complicated access to information, the registration process for CM use, and coordination in quality control activities (PVS-HTX01, 2026).

Similarly, a enterprise representative reported that inconsistencies in the management of raw material areas and traceability systems across different administrative units have increased challenges in maintaining brand credibility and strengthening market linkages for products bearing the Krong Ana Rice CM (PVS-DN01, 2026).

Overall, the findings suggest that while the implementation of the two-tier local government model has not affected the legal validity of the CM itself, it has substantially reshaped its governance and coordination mechanisms. These institutional changes underscore the need to shift from an administrative boundary-based management approach toward a governance model centered on production regions and value chain integration, thereby ensuring the effective and sustainable management of the Krong Ana Rice CM.

3.3. Governance gaps arising from the abolition of district-level administration

The dissolution of district-level administration has given rise to several governance gaps affecting the Krong Ana Rice CM.

First, a gap has emerged in governance coordination. Prior to the administrative restructuring, the People's Committee of Krong Ana District served as the central authority responsible for implementing the regulations governing the management and use of the CM. Although management responsibilities have been provisionally assigned to the People's Committee of Krong Ana Commune, no formal coordination mechanism has yet been established among the communes within the production region. This situation increases the risk of fragmented responsibilities and may reduce the effectiveness of CM governance.

Second, governance challenges have arisen in authorizing the use of the CM and providing guidance to potential users. Interview findings indicate that both producers and organizations remain uncertain about the competent authority responsible for providing guidance and approving the use of the CM. One interviewed farming household noted that the absence of clearly defined institutional responsibilities following the implementation of the two-tier local government model has created difficulties for producers seeking to participate in production activities and market linkages under the CM system (PVS-HD01, 2026).

Third, gaps exist in quality control and product traceability. Although all authorized users have adopted QR codes for product traceability, the current system provides information only at the product level and has not yet been integrated with a comprehensive database covering the production region. The lack of a unified information management system may weaken the ability to verify raw material origins and consistently monitor product quality across the entire certified area.

Fourth, institutional and financial gaps remain in the governance of the CM. At present, no specific legal guidance has been issued regarding the governance of CMs previously owned by district-level authorities before the implementation of administrative restructuring. This regulatory uncertainty complicates the determination of appropriate governance arrangements, funding mechanisms, and the allocation of responsibilities among relevant stakeholders.

According to an IP expert interviewed in this study, the most significant challenge does not stem from changes in administrative boundaries themselves but from the institutional gaps created in CM governance. As the production region is now distributed across multiple

commune-level administrative units, governance should shift from an approach based primarily on administrative boundaries to one centered on production regions and value chain integration, supported by an effective inter-communal coordination mechanism and a unified management system to ensure the sustainable utilization and protection of the Krong Ana Rice CM (PVS-CG01, 2026).

Overall, the findings indicate that the principal governance challenge lies not in the transfer of formal management authority, but in the absence of an integrated coordination mechanism for the entire production region covered by the Krong Ana Rice CM.

3.4. Discussion and proposed inter-communal governance model based on production regions and value chains

The findings indicate that the challenges encountered in the governance of the Krong Ana Rice CM following the implementation of the two-tier local government model primarily stem from changes in the governing authority and the absence of a unified coordination mechanism across the production region. Although the production area and the actors participating in the value chain have remained largely unchanged, the dissolution of the district-level administration—which previously served as the central coordinating body—has created governance gaps in key functions, including the authorization of CM use, quality control, and inter-jurisdictional coordination.

These findings are consistent with [3], who argued that the effectiveness of place-based IP instruments depends not only on product quality but also on the collective governance capacity and the ability of stakeholders within the production region to coordinate their activities. When coordination mechanisms become weakened or fragmented, maintaining quality standards and protecting product reputation becomes more difficult, thereby reducing the overall effectiveness and value of the CM.

The results also support the perspective advanced by [2], which emphasizes that agricultural products protected by IP rights can achieve sustainable development only when supported by a capable governance organization responsible for coordinating production activities, ensuring quality control, safeguarding product reputation, and strengthening value chain linkages. In the case of Krong Ana Rice, the certified production region is currently distributed across three commune-level administrative units without a formal coordination mechanism among them. This institutional arrangement increases the risk of inconsistencies in quality management, origin verification, and enforcement of regulations governing the CM.

Interview findings further reveal a broad consensus among stakeholder groups regarding the need for a unified governance mechanism covering the entire production region. Representatives of agricultural cooperatives highlighted that the absence of a common coordinating body has complicated access to information and administrative procedures related to the CM. Business representatives emphasized the importance of reliable traceability systems and consistent brand governance to maintain market confidence, while experts agreed

that the principal challenge lies not in the administrative restructuring itself but in the institutional gaps and the lack of an effective inter-communal coordination mechanism suited to the characteristics of the production region.

Based on these findings and drawing upon recommendations from [2] and [1] concerning the governance of agricultural IP assets, this study proposes the establishment of an **“Inter-Communal Governance Organization for the Krong Ana Rice CM”**. The proposed body would involve the participation of the People’s Committees of Krong Ana, Dur Kmal, and Ea Na Communes, together with agricultural cooperatives, enterprises, farming households, and relevant provincial authorities. Acting as a unified coordinating institution for the entire production region, the organization would be responsible for authorizing the use of the CM, overseeing quality assurance, verifying product origin, developing and maintaining a regional production database, and promoting the commercialization and market development of certified products.

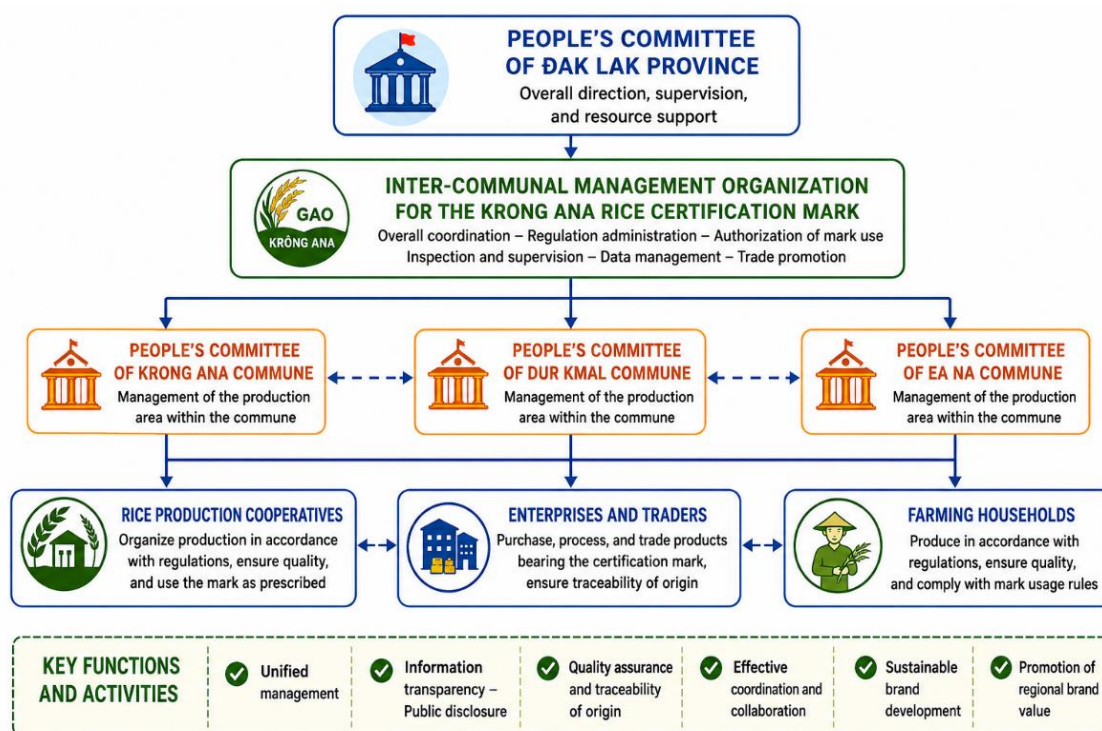


Figure 2. Proposed inter-communal governance model for the Krong Ana Rice Certification Mark under the two-tier local government system

The proposed model reflects a strategic transition from governance based primarily on administrative boundaries to a more integrated approach grounded in production regions and value chain coordination. Beyond addressing the institutional gaps created by the abolition of district-level administration, it is consistent with emerging trends in the governance of agricultural IP assets that emphasize multi-stakeholder participation and regional collaboration. The findings further indicate that an inter-communal coordination mechanism may provide a viable governance framework for CMs, CoMs, and GIs facing similar challenges arising from administrative restructuring in Viet Nam.

4. CONCLUSION

This study examined the governance of the Krong Ana Rice CM in the context of the implementation of the two-tier local government system and found that the administrative restructuring has created significant governance gaps, particularly in terms of coordination mechanisms, inter-communal collaboration, and the management of the production region. The findings demonstrate that effective governance of a CM depends not only on the formal ownership of the IP right but also on the existence of a coherent governance framework aligned with the characteristics of the production region and its value chain.

The study contributes empirical evidence on the implications of local government reform for the governance of agricultural IP assets and proposes an inter-communal governance model based on production regions and value chain integration to enhance the effective utilization, protection, and sustainable development of the Krong Ana Rice CM. These findings may provide useful policy and practical references for other localities managing CMs and community-based IP assets in the context of administrative restructuring in Viet Nam.

Based on these findings, the study recommends that the legal framework governing CMs be revised and strengthened to address changes resulting from administrative reorganization. It also advocates the establishment of an inter-communal coordination mechanism involving local authorities, agricultural cooperatives, enterprises, and producers to ensure effective governance and long-term sustainability. Future research should focus on quantifying the economic impacts of CM governance and evaluating the applicability of the proposed model to other agricultural products protected by similar forms of IP rights.

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