

Developments in protecting common food names, as well as new threats and restrictions facing food producers globally.



3rd Quarter 2017

ALERT

Chairman's Message

Stopping the Blanket Acceptance of the EU's GI List Agreements

There's hope that we're coming to the end of an era when the European Union could get blanket approval on a long list of GIs as a pro forma postscript in trade deals with other nations.

Moving such lists behind closed doors, without any opportunity for public comment or opposition, has led to such travesties as EU's confiscation of common cheese names in

Canada, where questions still linger for non-EU manufacturers about how to label such popular cheeses as feta, muenster and asiago.



The lesson comes not a moment too soon. This summer and fall we find ourselves in a whirlwind of activity concerning major GI lists in review in some of the most important trading markets in the world - China, Japan and Mexico. One of CCFN's primary goals has been to shine a light on the EU's practice of slipping GI protections through without a nation's thorough review of the impact on common names. We've stressed to key nations dealing with the EU that these GI lists hold enormous importance in agricultural trade. It looks like that message is getting through.

China, Japan and Mexico are all in the midst of a review process on GI lists, a critical step to ensuring that generic names and terms remain accessible to all. CCFN has seized this opportunity to comment to those countries' governments, stressing that such common names as "feta" and "gorgonzola" should not be on these lists, and calling for clarity in how compound terms such as Prosciutto di Parma are handled - that is, to ensure that a component term (like "prosciutto" in this example) remains generic.

Thanks to the work of CCFN and savvy trade negotiators, countries now see that it's against their best interests to rubber-stamp these complex EU requests without public input and protection of generic terms. Now the challenge is to ensure that China, Japan, Mexico and other nations respond to the evidence given in public comment, and prevent the EU from monopolizing common terms that should be free for all to use.

Errico Auricchio
CCFN Chairman

CCFN Files Objections Regarding Proposed China-EU GI Agreement

CCFN filed objections last month with the Chinese government regarding several specific cheese and meat names that the European Union (EU) is seeking to protect as part of a bilateral agreement with China, in addition to collaborating with the wine industry on grape varieties also threatened under that agreement.. [Read More](#)



CCFN To Defend Common Names on Proposed Mexican-EU GI List



US-Mexican Dairy Alliance Meeting in August

Mexico has posted for comment by October 9 a proposed list of GIs that would be protected within its EU free trade agreement process. As reported in the last CCFN ALERT, we have worked diligently with the Mexican government and companies within Mexico to seek to safeguard the use of common names

and push for fair and transparent processes in establishing protected GIs. This work has been particularly active since 2016 when Mexico and the EU launched negotiations to update their free trade agreement (FTA). The EU has made clear its intent to use those FTA discussions to seek to force Mexico to approve a lengthy list of hundreds of GIs, accompanied by a nebulous and broad scope of protection. [Read More](#)

CCFN Also Mounting Defense for Names on Japan-EU GI List

CCFN is working to ensure that generic names for certain cheeses, meats, wines and other foods can remain in use in Japan by filing objections to inclusion of such terms on a proposed list of protected geographical indications (GIs) in the Japan-European Union free trade agreement. CCFN commended Japan for publishing the list for comment, a constructive protocol that the EU has not always employed in previous trade negotiations. [Read More](#)



CCFN at WIPO Biannual Symposium: More Dialogue Needed To Safeguard Common Names

In too many countries, current geographical indications (GI) policies are often woefully lacking in safeguards for common food and beverage names, creating an increasingly disruptive situation in global trade that unfairly favors some producers over others. But an equitable approach is wholly achievable and



should be pursued immediately. That was the message of Ambassador Allen Johnson, President of Allen F. Johnson & Associates, representing CCFN early this summer in Yangzhou, China, at the Worldwide Symposium on Geographical Indications. Johnson called on the meeting organizer, the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), which is the lead multilateral organization examining global GI policies, to foster a broader dialogue on ways GI guidelines must respect the inherent rights of food producers to use generic names and comply with other international commitments. [Read More](#)

U.S. Mulls NAFTA Modernization; CCFN Calls for GI Provisions

Any new negotiations on the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) should include specific due process provisions on geographical indications



(GIs) and should safeguard common food and beverage names, in continuation of existing U.S. priorities on the escalating issue of the role of GIs in global food and agricultural trade. That's the message sent by CCFN in June to the U.S. Administration on NAFTA modernization in filing formal comments and testifying at an inter-agency hearing on the topic. [Read More](#)

Also ...

Greeks Move to Protect "Greek Yogurt"... According to media reports, Greece's Ministry of Agriculture is setting up a working group to prepare an application for a Protected Designation Origin (PDO) for "Greek Yogurt" within the EU's geographical indication system. In countries like the U.S. where the yogurt has become immensely popular, "Greek" is regarded as a style of manufacturing yogurt that creates a product with thicker consistency, not an indicator of where the product was produced.



EU seeks protection for 906 new GIs at once in Australia... In early summer the European Union filed an application in Australia seeking the determination of more than 900 wine geographical indications. According to press reports, some of the names are very familiar and might be considered generic in Australia, such as "Port", "Sherry", "Chianti", and "Chablis grand cru". The Australian government accepted objections until late August, and will be making determinations in the weeks ahead.

New Zealand Anticipates EU Negotiations with Fresh GI

Perspective... The New Zealand agricultural community will be watching carefully any discussions of GI protections included in a New Zealand-EU free trade agreement. As reported recently in the [New Zealand Herald](#), Fonterra director of global stakeholder affairs Philip Turner says the dairy industry wants New Zealand to take a stand on GIs in upcoming talks. The local industry had asked the Europeans to "draw a line in the sand" on GIs and produce a definitive list, but had been rebuffed. "That makes me suspicious," Turner said. Turner is wary of the "creeping" nature of the EU's agenda, when it comes to protecting a few names that then lead to a long list of popular foods. "People are just listing every name they can think of on the basis that they think it will be useful to their producers," he said.

At the same time, demonstrating that protection for both rightful GIs and commonly used food names can co-exist, New Zealand just launched its own GI program for wine and spirits, which the government says will help to differentiate New Zealand brands locally and overseas. Wine is a key export for the New Zealand economy.

CCFN on the Road... CCFN Executive Director Jaime Castaneda was in Japan in June to meet with agricultural officials on ways to establish positive GI policies in the wake of the EU-Japan Agreement in Principle

trade deal that was announced the prior week. Castaneda and CCFN Sr. Director Shawna Morris also travelled to China in May with a similar mission, which was echoed by Ambassador Allen Johnson when he spoke at the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) Symposium in Yangzhou this summer. Last month, Castaneda and dairy industry leaders met with Mexican officials at the 2nd U.S.-Mexico Dairy Alliance meeting, helping further iterate the importance of fair GI policies and the protection of common names. (See story on Mexican-EU FTA above.)



A Last Sigh of Summer:

A geographical dispute over pierogis in the U.S.

Food fight erupts over pierogi-related festival names. Names connected with food delicacies are a source of heated discourse around the world, as further evidenced by



a new federal court case over whether the town of Edwardsville, Pennsylvania, can continue to hold an annual "Edwardsville Pierogi Festival" or must yield to the "Pierogi Fest" that is held 700 miles away in Whiting, Indiana, just outside Chicago. The pierogi is a potato-filled dumpling common in U.S. communities populated by Polish immigrants more than a century ago.

The Whiting chamber of commerce says the Pennsylvania pierogi fans are infringing on its trademark. Lawyers for the Whiting "Pierogi Fest" recently sent a letter demanding the Edwardsville organizers either stop using the name or pay a licensing fee. The fight has landed in federal court, where Edwardsville lawyers filed a lawsuit last month against the organizers of the Whiting event.

The Associated Press quotes Edwardsville leaders as incredulous. "People are beside themselves. It's ridiculous," said Jackie Kubish Moran, president of the Edwardsville Hometown Committee, which runs the Pennsylvania event.

"No person on planet Earth is going to confuse [the two events]," said Jim Haggerty, the lawyer for the Edwardsville group. "We don't think they're acting in good faith, and we think they're bullies."

Hopefully by next festival season the two parties will have settled their differences over a few tasty dumplings.

About CCFN

The Consortium for Common Food Names is an independent, international non-profit alliance that represents the interests of consumers, farmers, food producers and retailers. We are working to protect worldwide the right to use common food names.

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