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## **CCFN Urges Trump Administration to Escalate Opposition to Geographical Indications Policies Designed to Hurt U.S. Manufacturing of Food Products**

**Washington, D.C., March 8, 2017** — The Consortium for Common Food Names today encouraged the Trump Administration to aggressively oppose unacceptable geographical indications policies designed to help European farmers, food producers and others by forcing non-Europeans to rebrand familiar products with unfamiliar names.

[Testifying](#) before the office of the U.S. Trade Representative, Consortium Senior Director Shawna Morris noted that the United States has pushed hard against European Union geographical indications policies in the past and urged Trump’s trade policy team to continue and intensify U.S. opposition to what amounts to a growing threat to U.S. manufacturing of foods with common names.

“The EU’s approach ... is designed to steal commonly used names from those who built markets for those products and instead monopolize use of those terms in foreign and domestic markets,” Morris said. “What better way to erase competition in third country markets than to ban the use by competitors of commonly used names?”

Morris stressed that CCFN—an alliance of consumers, food producers and retailers—does not oppose the concept of geographical indications (GIs), which have long protected unique regional products, including food products like Idaho potatoes and Washington apples in this country. But it vigorously opposes European efforts to use geographical indications to confiscate common names and shield its producers from competition from other countries.

The EU strategy threatens to restrict U.S. producers from using food names like parmesan, bologna, and many others long considered generic worldwide. If successful, such restrictions could force food companies to relabel these products with names like hard-grated cheese or ground meat sausage.

“This is an issue that threatens to impact a variety of sectors—from dairy to wine to meat to horticulture to rice and more,” Morris said. “GI systems cover all manner of food and agricultural products and are poised to continue an expansion into covering non-food manufactured products such as textiles and apparel, ceramics and other products as well.”

Morris noted that recently the EU has pursued its GI strategy largely through free trade agreements and through the World Intellectual Property Organization, the United Nations intellectual property agency.

In the process, she said, normal procedures have been bypassed, making it difficult or impossible for others to object or influence decisions on GIs.

“We strongly condemn the EU’s policies and actions, but we also believe that those countries that are flagrantly disregarding their trade and IP commitments in order to curry favor with the EU must be held to account for the unjustified market access restrictions they are creating against U.S. exports,” she said.

Morris spotlighted as an example of this harmful pattern the recent EU-Canada free trade agreement, in which the EU insisted on GIs for generic terms such as muenster and asiago cheese. Considerable fault also lies with Canada, she said, “for caving to the siren song of securing greater market access to the EU and in the process abandoning its due process procedures for IP and prior market access commitments.”

Morris’ testimony came at a hearing scheduled to help the office of the Trade Representative prepare its annual review of intellectual property rights protections among U.S. trading partners. Her testimony summarized a more detailed, 25-page written [statement](#) submitted by CCFN to the Trade Representative in February.

Among CCFN’s specific requests to the Trade Representative were that it hold trading partners accountable for their trade commitments and that it preserve market access negotiated through earlier trade agreements. In addition, it asked the Trade Representative to ensure that geographical indication protections do not violate rights such as company trademarks and that they do not prevent others from using widely used generic terms like feta and prosciutto. Finally, CCFN asked that USTR ensure that all those affected have an adequate opportunity to oppose proposed GIs to help preserve terms that could be threatened through certain GI applications.

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*The Consortium for Common Food Names (CCFN) is an independent, international non-profit alliance whose goal is to work with leaders in agriculture, trade and intellectual property rights to foster the adoption of high standards and model geographical indication guidelines throughout the world. Those interested in joining can find information at [www.CommonFoodNames.com](http://www.CommonFoodNames.com).*