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## **CCFN Commends U.S. Denunciations of EU's Geographical Indications Abuses; Calls for Binding Commitments from U.S. Trading Partners**

**(Washington D.C., April 26, 2019)** The United States this week rebuked the European Union for its abuses on geographical indications (GI) policies, describing the adverse impact on U.S. companies' access to EU and other markets when the EU claims sole rights to use generic food names like "parmesan" and "feta". In its annual Special 301 intellectual property report, the U.S. Trade Representative's Office (USTR) said it will work to ensure that U.S. trading partners do not make bilateral GI agreements with the EU that violate prior rights of U.S. exporters or otherwise undermine a producer's rights to use generic terms.

"For too long the United States has tolerated its trading partners' disregard of their market access concessions and their acquiescence to EU GI demands that have negatively impacted suppliers from the United States and others throughout the New World," said Jaime Castaneda, Executive Director of the Consortium for Common Food Names (CCFN).

CCFN Chairman Errico Auricchio added, "With this report the USTR sends a strong message on the EU's misuse of GIs to erect barriers to trade; to remedy the problems the report so accurately diagnoses, we urge the Administration to promptly and forcefully follow through by securing binding commitments from U.S. trading partners that preserve market access rights for exporters."

Overall, the report states, the EU GI agenda remains "highly concerning, because it significantly undermines the scope of trademarks and other IP rights held by U.S. producers and imposes barriers on market access for American-made goods that rely on the use of common names." As part of its trade agreement negotiations, "the EU pressures trading partners to prevent all

producers, other than in certain EU regions, from using certain product names, such as fontina, gorgonzola, asiago, or feta. This is despite the fact that these terms are the common names for products and produced in countries around the world.”

Castaneda called on the USTR to build further upon the positive precedent established in the USMCA Side Letter Agreement with Mexico, which affirmed market access rights on a subset of common product terms.

“In addition, we encourage the Administration to evaluate the full range of tools at its disposal to address the deeply asymmetrical nature of the U.S.-EU food trade relationship. The United States is a large and lucrative market for many European food makers even as the EU bans the import of accurately labeled common name U.S. foods into its own market. This deficit of equal opportunity – a \$1 billion trade deficit in cheese alone – is one that must be remedied,” he said.

CCFN filed extensive [comments](#) to the USTR expressing concern about the ongoing attack on manufacturers of foods with common names as the EU continues to pursue its GI agenda in bilateral and regional trade deals.

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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).*