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CCFN Objects to Confiscation of Common Names for Popular Meats and Cheeses Threatened Under China-EU GI Agreement; Supports Objections filed by U.S. Wine Institute

(Washington D.C., August 2, 2017) The Consortium for Common Food Names (CCFN) today filed objections 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.

“These generic terms are not new names or products in China or around the world, and there is no reason their names should belong solely to the EU. The EU must not be permitted to monopolize these names to unfairly eliminate competition,” said Jaime Castaneda, CCFN Executive Director. “We know from market research that many of the common name products at issue here, which are produced in many countries, have been sold in China and referenced in restaurant offerings for years.”

In its review of the list of geographical indications (GIs) under consideration, CCFN objected to the inclusion of the common names “feta”, “asiago” and “gorgonzola”, and also urged clear protections for generic terms at risk of being restricted by compound GI names, including “parmesan” from Parmigiano Reggiano, “mozzarella” in Mozzarella di Bufala Campana, “prosciutto” in Prosciutto di Parma and Prosciutto di San Danielle, “grana” in Grana Padano, “romano” in Pecorino Romano, and “cheddar” in West Country Farmhouse Cheddar. CCFN does not object to the protection of legitimate GI compound names such as “Prosciutto di Parma” but stressed that China must clarify that generic terms within such names – such as “prosciutto” – remain free for all to use. In some past EU agreements with other nations this has not been clear, resulting in confusion and unfair market restrictions. In other cases, countries have opted to provide such clarity, to the benefit of all involved in maintaining a variety of supply source options throughout the value chain.

CCFN worked to organize oppositions across various elements of its membership that export to China, including companies from the U.S, Australia and New Zealand, and collaborated with allies such as the Wine Institute that likewise sought assurances on the continued generic use of various wine grape varieties.

“We applaud the Chinese government for inviting comment on the GI proposal, and we are using this process to vigorously defend the rights of producers around the world to continue to use key common names in China,” said Castaneda. “It is essential that China’s trading partners, including the U.S. government, now work closely with China to ensure that the process is a genuine one that appropriately results in the rejection of GIs for terms already in common usage.”

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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.