

Contact: Shawna Morris, Sr. Director
+1 (703) 528-4818 (USA) or
smorris@commonfoodnames.com

Consortium for Common Food Names Welcomes U.S. Congressional Response Denouncing Geographical Indications Treaty Impacting Food Exports

Washington, D.C., July 16, 2015 – The Consortium for Common Food Names (CCFN) commends U.S. Congressional leaders for urging fixes to a treaty that could limit the use of generic food names in export markets and impact the sales of cheeses, meats, wines and a wide range of other products.

Objecting to an expansion of geographical indications (GI) protections aimed at potentially limiting certain common food names to a specific region or country without sufficiently protecting generic names such as “parmesan” or “feta”, Congressional leaders of the four committees involved in overseeing trade and intellectual property issues sent a strong letter to the Director of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO). The letter regarded recent revisions to the Lisbon Agreement for the Protection of Appellations of Origin.

“Because of the flawed process and outcome, we believe that the result of the Agreement cannot be viewed as a legitimate international agreement,” they wrote, adding that the revised agreement called WIPO’s role as a “constructive forum” into question.

They also expressed concern about possible trade violations saying, “We are very concerned that parties to this agreement will implement it in a manner inconsistent with existing international trade obligations, including under the World Trade Organization’s Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of International Property Rights.” The letter further urged WIPO to “take appropriate steps to rectify the funding situation and to implement the agreement in a fair and balanced way that adequately protects the interests of trademark owners and users of generic names.”

Signing the letter were Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Chuck Grassley (R-IA) and Ranking Member Patrick Leahy (D-VT), House Judiciary Committee Chairman Bob Goodlatte (R-VA) and

Ranking Member John Conyers (D-MI), Senate Finance Committee Chairman Orrin Hatch (R-UT) and Ranking Member Ron Wyden (D-OR), House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Paul Ryan (R-WI) and Ranking Member Sandy Levin (D-MI).

"We know the agreement is aimed at limiting global competition," said Jaime Castaneda, CCFN's Executive Director, "and we applaud these Congressional leaders for speaking up and seeking a fair deal that protects the interests of food producers and consumers around the world. We agree with their message questioning whether this agreement will create violations of existing international commitments by countries under the World Trade Organization."

Read the full letter [here](#).

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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.