

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

EU Spoils 10-Year Anniversary of Final Codex Cheese Standards by Turning Its Back on Them: New Geographical Indication Approved for Generic Name

(Washington D.C., October 19, 2017) In an aggressive new push by the European Union (EU) on geographical indications (GIs), the EU today tossed overboard its commitment to international standards by confirming its approval in today's [EU Official Journal](#) a new GI that grants Denmark sole use of a common cheese name: “danbo”. Unlike other GI registrations, “danbo” already holds the status of a generic term according to Codex Alimentarius, one of the leading international standards-setting bodies. Moreover, both the EU as a whole and Denmark individually participated in and approved the process to preserve the inclusion of “danbo” in the Codex cheese standards, a process that was finalized just a decade ago, in 2007.

“The EU has thumbed its nose at its World Trade Organization (WTO) commitment to respect international standards. This is an extremely alarming precedent that shows the EU breaking commitments in order to create its own international standard – with the aim to monopolize use of a term and gain an unfair advantage in the marketplace,” said Jaime Castaneda, Executive Director of the Consortium for Common Food Names (CCFN).

“The European Commission has stated numerous times that its only goal is to protect a handful of names and leave generic terms alone. But this action suggests that this is not so, and we once again respectfully request that the EU put in writing all the generic food names and terms that are in jeopardy in its ongoing ‘name grab’. By approving a GI for an internationally standardized term, the EU demonstrates that all names are in question, including numerous names long covered by those international Codex standards – from mozzarella to cheddar,” he said.

“When producers can no longer use a common name, it effectively shuts them out of that category – which is of course the EU’s intention when it abuses GI policy. With today’s move, there is no longer any safe ground,” Castaneda added.

Danbo, a semi-soft cheese, is produced in numerous countries, including Uruguay, Argentina and South Africa, among others.

“It is inconceivable that the EU is proceeding with this step when Argentina and other nations are current producers of danbo,” said Osvaldo Capellini of the Federacion Panamericana de Lecheria (Panamerican Dairy Federation) and the Centro de la Industria Lechera Argentina (Argentina Dairy Association). “What is even more astonishing is that the EU is ignoring our interests even as they are seeking to negotiate on trade issues with Argentina and other Mercosur nations. This is not a positive beginning.”

The Uruguayan Dairy Association, representing manufacturers of danbo in that nation, concurred and echoed Capellini’s sentiments.

Castaneda noted that a fair solution regarding “danbo” would have been to include the geographical component of the name, which is done through compound terms such as “Provolone Valpadana” or “Prosciutto di Parma”. Multiple other GIs have employed this compound formulation, coupled with a clear reassurance that the generic portion of that name – such as “prosciutto” or “provolone” remains generic for general use.

“One need only look at an approved name like ‘Gouda Holland’ to know that a better solution exists. ‘Danish Danbo’ would be a legitimate GI that includes the geographic location in its name,” he said.

“An equitable approach to GIs is possible, but food industries, farm organizations and governments – even individual nations within the EU itself – need to stand up to these EU encroachments to maintain fair competition in the global marketplace,” Castaneda said. “We invite all those who care about the importance of preserving a level playing field through international standards and commitments established under the WTO agreement to join with CCFN in insisting on a better way forward on GIs.”

###

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.