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## **Major Cheese-Producing Nations Stand Firm Against EU’s Misappropriation of Generic Cheese Name “Havarti” in Abuse of Geographical Indications**

**(Washington D.C., October 24, 2019)** Major dairy-producing organizations around the world are challenging the European Union’s (EU) decision to disregard market realities and international trade standards by granting Denmark sole ownership of the generic name “havarti” cheese in Europe. With the EU’s publication of the decision yesterday, “havarti” will be granted a geographical indication (GI), even though the name “havarti” does not refer to any geographic region in Denmark, and most havarti cheese is produced outside of Denmark – including by Danish company Arla Foods in the United States. The move blocks any producer outside of Denmark from selling cheese by that name within the EU and will add “havarti” to the list of popular food names such as parmesan, feta and chorizo that the EU is attempting to monopolize in global trade.

“This is an egregious overstep that attempts to shut the door on competition from the many producers of havarti around the world – including within the EU itself,” said Jaime Castaneda, Executive Director of the Consortium for Common Food Names (CCFN). “And the fact that the Danes are making havarti in Wisconsin made with milk from Wisconsin cows calls into question the defining factor of GIs: that they are tied to a specific ‘geography’ or place,” said Castaneda.

Less than half of the world’s havarti is made within Denmark, according to CCFN estimates; other major producers include the United States and Canada, with additional production in Australia, New Zealand, and in other European nations such as Germany. (See [infographic](#).)

Leading dairy associations from Argentina, Australia, New Zealand, Uruguay and the United States together with CCFN sent a [letter](#) to EU Commissioner for Trade Cecilia Malmström and EU Commissioner for Agriculture Phil Hogan expressing outrage at the EU’s disregard of established international standards and protocols for fair trade.

“Such an approval lays bare the fact that all too often the EU GI system is used not for legitimate intellectual property protection, but instead for barely concealed protectionism and economic gain,” the letter states.

Individual havarti producers are also expressing their disapproval. “We’ve been making havarti for many years, and our havarti has won numerous awards, including third place in the most recent World Championship Cheese Contest,” said Luke Buholzer, vice president of sales and fourth generation cheesemaker at Klondike Cheese, Monroe, Wis. “It’s outrageous, really, that anyone would claim to have sole ownership of this name.”

Another consideration is the history of the cheese itself, added Dominique Delugeau, Senior Vice President of Specialty Cheese and International Trade at Saputo Cheese USA Inc.

“Within Europe there have been many variations of havarti made. In fact, the true original smear rind Danish havarti for the most part has been replaced by a style of havarti for large-scale production. Why should this deserve a GI?” Delugeau said. “In addition, havarti has been produced in the U.S. for many years by talented cheesemakers. The name ‘havarti’ is clearly a generic term.”

CCFN and other organizations in the EU, Latin America and Oceania suggested that an acceptable, legitimate GI would include the geographic component of the name, such as “Danish Havarti”; this mirrors existing GIs such as “Orkney Scottish Island Cheddar”, a specialty type of cheddar cheese.

Earlier this year the United States rebuked the EU for its abuses on GI policies in its [Special 301 intellectual property report](#) from the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative. In addition, CCFN Chairman Errico Auricchio urged further U.S. action on GI abuses in a [letter to President Trump](#).

Havarti is one of 12 cheeses whose characteristics and manufacturing standards are registered in the Codex Alimentarius, whose Commission is one of the leading international standards-setting bodies and a centerpiece of the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme. The EU and Denmark actively participated in and approved of “havarti” in the Codex cheese standards, a process that clearly defines the method of production and generic name for those cheeses.

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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).*