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CCFN Urges Trump Administration to Seek Stronger Commitments on Generic Names New Steps Needed to Ensure Countries Fully Vet Geographical Indications

(Washington D.C., February 26, 2020) In testimony today before the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR), the Consortium for Common Food Names (CCFN) urged the U.S. Administration to secure “firm and explicit commitments” with trading partners to assure the future use of specific generic food and beverage names targeted by EU monopolization efforts, and to reject the use of GIs as barriers to trade.

“There is a persistent push by the European Union and other European interests to dismantle competition and erect barriers to trade which must be more strongly combatted,” said CCFN Senior Director Shawna Morris in her testimony. “Across all markets, but particularly those with which the United States has a free trade agreement or is in the process of pursuing a free trade agreement, we urge the Administration to secure explicit commitments from our trading partners that build upon the positive precedent established in the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) whereby market access rights were clearly and definitively affirmed for a non-exhaustive list of common used product terms.”

Morris expressed appreciation for the Administration’s focus on tearing down trade barriers that hinder U.S. competitiveness, but said that without further commitments that reject illegitimate GIs, U.S. companies are likely to run into further obstacles. That’s because EU governments and stakeholders continue to pursue an agenda to monopolize popular generic names with key trading partners.

Morris said the list of common terms in the USMCA was the type of tool that “should be carried forward aggressively by the Administration in order to safeguard our World Trade Organization and free trade agreement market access rights in the strongest manner possible.”

CCFN provided [written](#) and [oral](#) testimony as the USTR prepares its annual review on the status of intellectual property rights protections in its trading relationships around the globe (Special 301 Report). The agency is expected to release the 2020 Special 301 Report this spring.

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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.