

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

## **U.S. Issues Strong Statements on EU’s Geographical Indications Abuses, But CCFN Says More Action is Needed Now**

**(Washington D.C., May 2, 2018)** In its annual intellectual property report released Friday, the U.S. Trade Representative’s Office repeated its serious concerns regarding the European Union’s (EU) “aggressive promotion of its exclusionary geographical indications (GIs) policies” and called on U.S. trading partners to respect generic food and beverage names. The Consortium for Common Food Names (CCFN) applauded the strong wording in the report, but urged the U.S. government to move beyond warnings to concrete actions that will hold trading partners accountable when it comes to respecting generic names.

“We appreciate the excellent work that has gone into this report calling out the EU on its abusive GI practices, and the harm done to U.S. producers, but it is disheartening to see these abuses being carried out at this very moment with some of the most important U.S. trading partners,” said CCFN Executive Director Jaime Castaneda. “It’s time for the U.S. to put more muscle behind these words. We need countries to begin listening, and to defend names against what is an aggressive grab for market access by the EU.”

CCFN Chairman Errico Auricchio, President of BelGioioso Cheese in Green Bay, Wis., noted, for example, that Mexico is signaling that it could impose new restrictions on the use of common cheese names such as ‘parmesan’, ‘munster’ and ‘feta’, disregarding significant information provided by CCFN and local industry. This is happening even as the USTR report states that, in terms of GIs in the EU-Mexico agreement, “Protection must only be granted after a fair and transparent examination independent of the trade negotiations, and the outcome must adequately respect existing trademark rights and continue to allow for the use of common names.”

“Companies like BelGioioso have done much of the groundwork developing consumer love and trust for our cheeses in Mexico and other places. How can we stand by and allow the EU to steal the generic names of our products and push us out? The answer is, we cannot,” Auricchio said.

“In recent months the line on respecting existing rights and market access agreements has been crossed by Mexico, Canada and others, which is a failure not just in terms of their commitments to the U.S. but in their commitment to their own consumers, who will now have less choice and will be served by a less competitive marketplace,” said Castaneda. “The U.S. must make it clear to countries that violate trade agreements that there are consequences to their actions – particularly during the current NAFTA negotiations.”

CCFN filed extensive [comments](#) to the USTR expressing concern about the ongoing attack on manufacturers of foods with common names as the EU continues to pursue its GI agenda in bilateral and regional trade deals. “The U.S. must continue to hold other nations to their trade commitments concerning market access, but also to intellectual property rules that they have already established within their own countries,” CCFN noted in its comments.

###

*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).*