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## **USMCA Breaks New Ground with Better Geographical Indications Policy as Defending Common Food Names Becomes a U.S. Priority**

**(Washington D.C., Oct. 8, 2018)** Companies in North America that produce foods that bear generic names are praising the U.S. government for the seminal language included in the new U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) regarding geographical indications (GI) policy and the protection of common food names.

“USMCA marks a sea change in GI policy, recognizing the equal importance of the protection of distinctive products through GIs, and the defense of generic terms long used in the marketplace,” said Jaime Castaneda, Executive Director of the Consortium for Common Food Names (CCFN). “The U.S. Administration demonstrated great leadership in pushing forward many key concepts for effective GI policy, which are of benefit to consumers and producers throughout North America, and which CCFN has long promoted and worked on with government leaders. These include commitments on transparency and the ability for stakeholders to object to pending GIs that may infringe on their rights to use generic terms.”

The USMCA marks the first time the United States has specifically included reference to the rights of generic name users within a trade agreement – a goal CCFN has been working toward for many years. The deal establishes a non-exhaustive list of commonly used cheese names that may not be restricted by Mexico moving forward, including “mozzarella”, “cheddar”, “provolone” and others. In addition, Canada and Mexico will be adopting GI parameters that make it more difficult for any nation to register new GIs that are common food names, and common name users will be able to oppose GI applications that would monopolize use of generic terms.

“These explicit considerations safeguarding generic terms are essential,” said CCFN Chairman Errico Auricchio, president of BelGioioso Cheese, “because the EU continues to move the lines on which names of cheeses, meats, wines and other products are fair game when it comes to abusing GI policies and monopolizing common names and terms.”

While praising U.S. government leadership in safeguarding generic terms, CCFN remains disappointed in the Mexican government for succumbing to pressures by the EU to give up a number of highly used common names within the Mexico-EU free trade agreement, demonstrating that CCFN's work in the region is not yet done.

"The confiscation of these generic terms is disruptive to commerce and to pre-existing trade relationships, and in the end does not benefit Mexican retailers, producers or consumers," Castaneda said. "We continue to work with the U.S. government and others to ensure that current trade to Mexico is minimally affected."

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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).*