

Developments in protecting common food names, as well as new threats and restrictions facing food producers globally.



2nd Quarter 2017

ALERT

Chairman's Message

Keeping on Course, Pressing the Points That Matter

Encouraging news from the U.S. government - via the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative - which recently confirmed its support of our cause in its annual intellectual property report. CCFN has been working to inform the new administration about the harmful impact of the European Union's attempts to expand the concept of geographical indications (GIs) on a broad range of food sectors. USTR concurs, noting that, "The EU GI agenda remains highly concerning, especially because of the significant extent to which it undermines the scope of trademarks and other IP [intellectual property] rights held by U.S. producers, and imposes barriers on market access for American-made goods and services that rely on the use of common names, such as parmesan or feta."



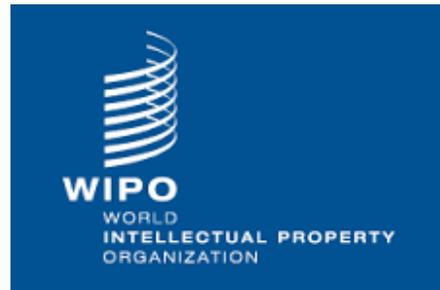
Having the U.S. continue to prioritize the support of common names is extremely important, so the fact that the new administration's report strongly calls out the need to rein in the EU is a notable achievement that CCFN has worked hard to deliver. This type of support is essential as we continue to press the points that matter in this fight and were highlighted in USTR's report: To make sure that GI protections don't infringe on the ability to use generic names; that GI policies clearly spell out which names and terms are protected; and that there is a process by which people can comment on and oppose GI policy decisions if they wish.

It's not a quick fight, and it's not an easy fight. But thanks to your support we're keeping our issue on course, and we continue to make inroads in saving key names in many countries. One way we know we're being effective is when we hear our opponents complain that we're getting a voice at the table (as you'll see in the article about the WIPO information session below). When the opposition tries to shut you up it's a good sign you're hitting a nerve and having an impact! We're all the more energized to take the steps that are needed to protect food and beverage manufacturers around the world in their use of generic names.

Errico Auricchio
CCFN Chairman

CCFN Participates in WIPO Listening Session on GIs; Hosts Side Seminar in Geneva

This spring CCFN participated in a formal information session in Geneva of the **World Intellectual Property Organization** (WIPO), the United Nations agency dealing with intellectual property protection worldwide. Despite efforts by GI proponents to silence those defending common names, CCFN was invited by WIPO to speak at the GI information session, held in conjunction with the meeting of the WIPO Standing Committee on the Law of Trademarks, Industrial Designs and Geographical Indications (SCT). Among the speakers from industry, government and academia, CCFN addressed the rights of common name users and the need for fair and consistent GI policies. [Read More](#)



Trump Administration Commits to Continued Defense of Manufacturers Using Common Food Names



A report on intellectual property issued in May by the U.S. Trade Representative's Office (USTR) outlined the Trump Administration's continuing commitment to curtailing the damaging abuses of geographical indications (GIs) by the European Union (EU). The report highlighted ongoing threats to U.S. companies that legally use common food names both within the United States and in global trade. USTR's annual [Special 301 Report](#) outlined extensive efforts that the administration is making in numerous countries to stem the EU's efforts to use GIs to erect barriers to U.S. exports. [Read More](#)

CCFN Briefs New U.S. Administration Officials on GIs and Common Names

In addition to comments filed for the Special 301 Report (see story above), CCFN has been laying the groundwork over the last several months in order to help ensure that the GI issue is high on the radar screen of cabinet officials within the new administration. A prime opportunity to do just this was the Senate confirmation hearing and related questioning this spring of the now-confirmed U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer.



Multiple senators posed questions to the then-nominee about the issue of geographical indications and the impact their mis-use can have on U.S. products. Lighthizer's replies revealed a strong understanding and appreciation for the need to continue the U.S. government's aggressive stance on this topic. [Read More](#)

Mexico: One Step Forward, Yet Past Government Mis-Steps Continue to Haunt

Since 2015, CCFN has been advocating to the Mexican government about the harm that occurs because the country lacks a system for evaluating GIs. In fact, it was this lack of a system for evaluating GIs and formally considering opposition to them that led Mexico to approve GIs for asiago and gorgonzola under the WIPO Lisbon Agreement in 2015, despite CCFN's submission opposing such

recognitions. Our steady efforts bore fruit this spring with the introduction of legislation in Mexico to create a GI system that would require government examination of GI applications, opposition opportunities and the rejection of GI protection for generic names. This framework is a promising start, yet more work is needed to ensure full transparency, clarity and respect for Mexico's existing trade commitments. Mexico's legislature will resume work on this draft law when it reconvenes in the fall. CCFN will remain deeply involved as this process moves forward.



At the same time, a recent legal decision to not overturn Mexico's approval of a gorgonzola GI from Italy highlights the importance of this proposed law. CCFN organized a constitutional challenge on the gorgonzola GI, with mixed results in the recent ruling. [Read More](#)

Also ...

CCFN will participate in WIPO's Worldwide Symposium on Geographical

Indications, WIPO's flagship biennial event on GIs, in Yangzhou, China, June 29 to July 1. Ambassador

Allen Johnson, president of Allen F. Johnson & Associates, will represent CCFN, participating in two panels: "Geographical Indications: Challenges & Opportunities", and "Where To Go From Here."

Johnson served as Ambassador and Chief Agriculture Negotiator at the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) from 2001 to 2005. Johnson

will stress the negative commercial impacts on companies when they are unable to use common names and their market access rights are unfairly restricted. At the meeting CCFN will also continue to insist that WIPO move toward greater balance in the ongoing global GI discussion; at present WIPO



conference agendas are overwhelmingly dedicated to encouraging broader use of GIs using current mechanisms, with little discussion of the necessary safeguards that need to be in place to protect common names and the countless producers that use them in domestic and international trade.

The Canada-EU Trade Agreement could be activated as early as June,

even though the provisions in the agreement remain murky regarding how to treat potential new packaging and naming restrictions. It remains unclear how companies can ensure compliance with new limits on generic terms of feta, asiago, gorgonzola, fontina and muenster and related imagery on packages of those products.



CCFN continues to seek clarification, and is preparing a document for Canadian trade

officials that specifies the basis of concern and insists that Canada provide more detailed direction to food manufacturers. CCFN has repeatedly observed EU interests using incomplete information as an opportunity to make expansive claims to rights that limit competitors access to markets, resulting in domestic and international companies being harmed, and consumers being denied reasonably priced quality products.

EC Grants Croatia Controversial Wine Exemption ...Last month the

European Commission announced that Croatian vintners can use the word "teran" on some of their wine labels, even though the name formally belongs to Slovenia as a Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) registered in the EU. Teran wine, named after the grape variety, is made by both of the former Yugoslav states, though Slovenia



snagged the term before Croatia's accession to the EU. Now the Slovenians are crying foul, though the EU has argued that such exemptions are common, pointing to the example of vintners outside France using the term "burgundy." From CCFN's perspective, there is a clear, logical and fair approach that would have prevented this problem: First, don't restrict the use of a term already used in multiple countries; and second, employ compound names (such as "Slovenian Teran") for protected geographical indications.

UnCommon Hero

(A profile of one of the heroes who protect and promote common food names)

Ramiro Pérez Zarco, Executive Director, Asociación de Desarrollo Lácteo de Guatemala (ASODEL)



As with other Central American countries, Guatemala has a deep cultural and culinary appreciation for cheese, as well as an economic interest in the growth of the nation's dairy industry. Guatemalan companies produce fresh cheeses, as well as semi-soft and hard cheeses such as gouda, parmesan, muenster, mozzarella, provolone, ementhal, cheddar, and many other varieties.

Ramiro Pérez Zarco has both a personal and professional connection with dairy, having grown up in a family of dairy farmers, and now as head of ASODEL, Guatemala's dairy industry organization. In addition to his early career as a breeder of Jersey cows, he served with Guatemalan and Central American milk producer organizations, and he also served twice as vice minister of livestock in the country's Ministry of Agriculture. For the past seven years he's been with ASODEL, focused on "improving production efficiency, supporting brands in the marketplace, and working with the government in preserving the rights of free enterprise, equality and equity in local and international markets." [Read More](#)

About CCFN

The [Consortium for Common Food Names](#) is an independent, international non-profit alliance that represents the interests of consumers, farmers, food producers and retailers. We are working to protect worldwide the right to use common food names.

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Pass it Along!

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CCFN | 2107 Wilson Blvd., Suite 600 | Arlington, Virginia | USA | 22201-3061

CCFN, 2107 Wilson Blvd. Suite 600, Arlington, VA 22201-3061