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CCFN Gains WIPO Observer Status, Helping Ensure that Consumer Interests are Treated as a Priority in Geographical Indications Policies

(Washington D.C., October 11, 2019) The United Nations World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) has granted observer status to the Consortium for Common Food Names (CCFN), an important step forward in CCFN's ability to ensure balanced dialogue in the development of fair geographical indications (GI) policies that safeguard common names side-by-side with GI protections, to the benefit of consumers worldwide. The action took place at WIPO's Fifty-Ninth Series of Meetings of the Assemblies which concluded this week in Geneva.

"As the lead multilateral organization examining GI policies, WIPO plays a key role in fostering a broad dialogue on the ways GI guidelines must respect the inherent rights of food producers to use generic names," said CCFN Executive Director Jaime Castaneda. "CCFN has already been active in WIPO for years; we look forward to continuing productive discussions that consider food and beverage producers and consumers in all areas of the globe."

WIPO Observers can attend pertinent meetings of the WIPO assemblies, committees and working groups. One of the most contentious issues currently in discussion regarding GI policies is the structure and process surrounding the Geneva Act of the Lisbon Agreement, which may have a significant impact on how GIs are vetted and registered in multiple nations.

CCFN believes it is possible to find common ground on GI policies, but only if the rights of common name users are respected by countries and international organizations. To uphold that goal, GI registration processes must be objective, free of political pressure to restrict commerce, and provide due process to ensure that GI applications do not impair the continued use of generic names and terms.

“GI applications for genuinely unique regional specialties deserve protection and should be registered; GI applications that would infringe on others’ rights to use widely used terms should rightfully be rejected,” said Castaneda. “This is what CCFN will continue to fight for.”

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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.