



THE SOCIAL, ENVIRONMENTAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACT OF, AND LEGAL ISSUES AFFECTING, THE FRENCH CHEESES WITH PROTECTED DESIGNATION OF ORIGIN (PDO). THE EXAMPLE OF COMTÉ.

Introduction:

Cheeses with a Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) have long history and a strong link to a particular area - le terroir, as we say in France. When you buy a PDO cheese, you know where it was produced and you know that it was produced using specific methods passed on from generation to generation. PDO products play a strong economic, environmental, social and cultural role in Europe and France in particular.

The consumption of PDO cheese is growing throughout the world and especially in the U.S.

It is crucial therefore to include geographical indications (GIs) in the TTIP agreement, so that consumers are able to recognize these products and the guarantees that come with them.

1. Economic importance of PDO products.

1.1. There are 45 cheeses that have PDO designation in France. Together, they account for a total production of 235,000 tonnes of cheese and € 1.8 billion in turnover every year. Thus we are not talking about anecdotal or exotic production, but rather about an economic sector of primary importance.

1.2 The production of PDO cheeses are located most often in difficult geographical areas, mainly in the mountains. It constitutes a strategic economic activity for these regions. In many cases, it also encourages tourism.

1.3 In the Jura region of France where Comté is produced, the sector generates 8,000 jobs for a production of 60 000 tonnes per year. The mode of production is based on a unique "terroir", as for all PDOs, and local knowledge and a history that goes back, in the case of Comté, to the Middle Ages.

1.4 The production of Comté cheese continues to grow and offers interesting perspectives for dairy farmers in the Jura region. Only two months ago, a group of eight farms inaugurated a new production workshop. The cost of investment was 2.8 million euros.

2. Environmental importance.

2.1. PDO production systems are based on the use of natural grasslands. They promote sustainable production and contribute to the biodiversity of the local flora and fauna. This sustainable management of natural grasslands is also part of the solution to climate change through the storing carbon in the soil.

3. Social importance

3.1 PDO cheeses allow interesting local dynamics on the renewal of generations. The number of young farmers entering milk production is higher for PDO products than for the rest of the dairy sector.

3.2 PDO cheeses generate more employment than regular milk chains. CNAOLⁱ studies show that a production of 100 000 litres of milk generates 1 job in the regular milk sector but 2.8 jobs in the DPO sector

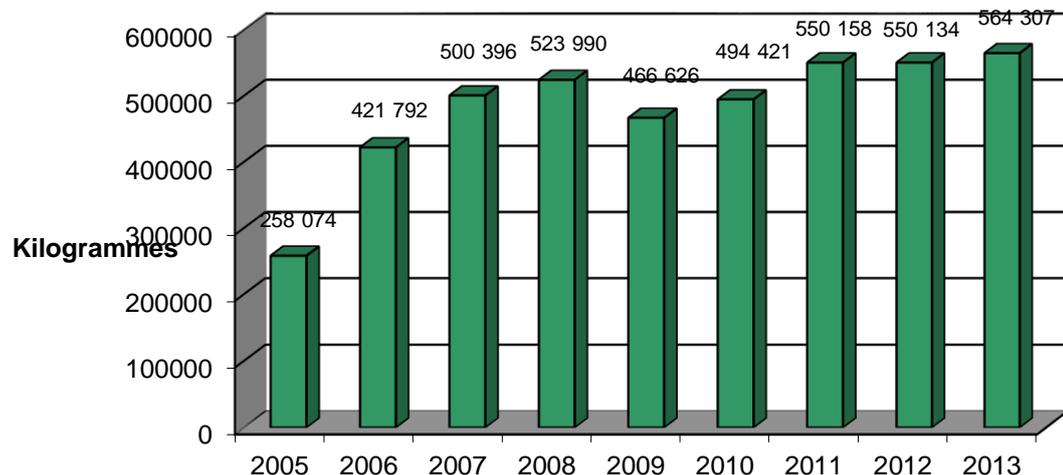
3.3 PDO cheese productions are generating tourism through visits to farms and processing facilities. In the Jura, the professional committee has created the "Route du Comté" that allow tourists to meet the various players in the sector: farmers, cheese makers and refiners.

3.4 The tourism industry is fully involved in the animation of the territory, and indeed promotes its vitality.

4. Market outlook in the U.S.

4.1 The ingredients that make up the particular character of our products appeal to American consumers. The Comté example clearly shows it.

US Comté exports



4.2 Exports of Comté are currently 560 tonnes per year. They are constantly increasing. The market outlook could be positive.

4.3 Food critics love Comté and write about it in magazines. Here is a sample of articles published in 2013 in the USA. Murray's, the retailer, is a fan of Comté. It even publishes promotional T-shirts for Comté !



4.4 I would like to end this speech with an anecdote. A refiner recently told me that a major retailer from the West Coast did not hesitate to fly from Seattle, across the USA and the Atlantic Ocean, to visit our cheese cellars. He wanted to taste and choose the wheels of cheese that corresponded the best to the tastes of his consumers. He also went to meet the cheese makers who proceed the wheels. That looks to me like a strong statement of confidence in our PDO Comté.

5. Conclusion

5.1 In this presentation I hope that I have shown that PDO cheeses have a unique “typicity”. Their characteristics are a reflection of their geographical areas, and local knowledge. These products, whose place in local economies is crucial, need to have their identity recognized and protected.

5.2 U.S. consumers are very discerning. They love good products with specific tastes. They also appreciate values embodied in the products related to culture, history, environmental protection, and the preservation of local knowledge. U.S. should therefore have access to information on the particular attributes of the products they are eating, and they should be protected from counterfeit products.

5.3 In a free trade agreement between Europe and the USA, it is important that the foundations of the treaty place the actors in the same competitive conditions. To do this, it is essential to recognize the protection afforded by GIs in the interests of both the farmers in Europe and consumers in the USA.

V. ELISSEFF – Managing Director – CIGC, member of CNAOL

Annex:

2013 Comté Press Coverage in USA

January

- **“The 53 Best Things We Ate this Year.” Molly Stevens, *Gourmet Live Online* (over 500,000 unique visitors/month).** In this list of the top foods of the year by *Gourmet Live* editors, Molly Stevens features the Comté fondue she savored at Auberge La Petite Echelle in the Jura Mountains.
- **Comté: It’s About the Microflora. Dan Myers, *The Daily Meal* (2,000,000 unique visitors/month).** Dan Myers describes the “Taste of Terroir” Comté tasting, explaining how microflora are responsible for Comté’s unique and diverse flavors and aromas.
- **“The Mac & Cheese Way.” Michael Hastings, *Winston-Salem Journal* (circulation: 106,000).** In an interview with Michael Hastings about her new book, “Mac & Cheese, Please!,” Laura Werlin states, “...the French Cheese and Savoy Cabbage Mac & Cheese recipe was pretty much inspired by my love for the cheese, Comté, and my desire to expose people to that cheese.”
- **“A Proper French Fondue.” Wini Moranville, *BonjourParis.com* (100,000 visitors/month).** Wini Moranville describes how she discovered Comté during a trip to France and how she fell in love with Comté fondue after visiting La Petite Echelle (during a CIGC press trip). The article features the Petite Echelle fondue recipe.



February

- **“Wine and Cheese as it was Meant to be.” Eric Pfanner, *The New York Times* (circulation: 816,319); *International Business Tribune* (circulation: 226,227).**
In the *New York Times*, Eric Pfanner describes the production of Vin Jaune and how its flavors are a perfect complement to Comté. This article also appeared in the *International Business Tribune*.
- **“A Cheese Plate Built for Two.” Katherine Hysmith, *Culture Magazine Online* (18,000 unique visitors/month), *Huffington Post Online* (31,000,000 unique visitors/month).** Culture magazine online features blogger Katherine Hysmith, who describes creating a cheese plate for Valentine’s Day that includes “a robust Comté.” This article also appeared on the Huffington Post.
- **“Comté Cooking Videos Now Available.” *PerishableNews.com* (readership n/a).** Perishable News Online features the Comté Cheese Association’s press release announcing the new Comté Cooking School Videos.

March

- **“Weekend Cooking—Comté Cheese.” Christopher Ryan, *America Blog* (300,000 unique visitors/month).** Christopher Ryan discusses the production of Comté cheese and features the Comté You Tube Channel, including a live stream of the “Aging Comté” video.
- **“The Wine Rack.” Dave DeSimone, *The Wine Rack Newsletter for Pittsburgh Tribune-Review* (readership: n/a).** In his newsletter for the *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review*, Dave DeSimone (who attended at 2011 press trip) features the new series of Comté cooking videos, noting “...I especially love Comté, the aromatic, nutty, yet creamy, semi-hard cow’s milk cheese from France’s Jura Mountains. Comté tastes great by itself with just a little tangy mustard, but it also presents many cooking possibilities.”
- **“The Funky Bits.” Alice Feiring, *Wine & Spirits* (circulation: 75,000).** Alice Feiring describes the Comté “Terroir Tasting” at the *Wine & Spirits* headquarters (hosted by the Comté Cheese Association), exploring the link between terroir and flavor. In her typical “renegade” prose, Feiring discusses microflora and its role in flavor development.

April

- **“DeRusha Eats Cheese at France 44.” Jason DeRusha, *CBS Minnesota* (viewership and readership: n/a).** In this segment for CBS Minnesota, Jason DeRusha interviews cheesemonger Benjamin Roberts of France 44 in Minneapolis, who talks about Comté and the Daphne Zepos Teaching Award. This segment and an article was also featured on CBSlocal.com.

May

- **“Meet Blair Graves, a Cheesemonger Among Us.” Daniel Walker, *Arkansas Times* (circulation: 25,890).** In the *Arkansas Times* (print and online versions), Daniel Walker profiles cheesemonger Blair Graves from Boulevard Bread, who mentions that Comté pairs well with Jura wines.

June

- **“Aspen’s Cheese Lady.” Paul E. Anna, *The Aspen Times* (Circulation: 11,500).** In the *Aspen Times*, Paul E. Anna describes Laura Werlin’s activities at the Food & Wine Classic in Aspen, noting that before the trip Laura spent a week in the Jura region of France learning about the making of Comté cheese.

July

- **“A Trip to the Jura.” Lisa Futterman. *Pastoral Blog* (readership: n/a).** On the *Pastoral* blog, Lisa Futterman describes her trip to the Jura as winner of the Comté Scholarship for ACS CCPs, describing the activities of the trip.
- **“In the Jura: Cows, Cheese and Wine of Course.” Becky Sue Epstein, *Intermezzo* (circulation: 285,000).** In *Intermezzo* magazine, Becky Sue Epstein (who attended the June 2011 press trip) describes the Comté region and the cheese’s production process, from the cows to the aging cellars. The article also includes travel information for the region.

September

- **“Comté Shows There’s More to Gruyere in the Alps.” Kirstin Jackson, *NPR Kitchen Window Online* (106,000 unique visitors/month).** On *NPR Kitchen Window* (an online publication by National Public Radio), Kirstin Jackson (who attended the June 2013 press trip) describes Comté’s history and production process, and clarifies the differences between Comté and Gruyere. The article also includes 3 Comté recipes.

October

- **“Fete Accompli.” Mimi Thompson, *Bon Appétit* (circulation: 1,500,000).**



Bon Appétit features blogger Mimi Thompson's dinner party recipes, including Comté Gougeres and French Onion Soup with Comté.

- **"Late-Season Market Offerings Merit Special Wine Pairings."** Dave DeSimone, *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review* (circulation: 160,000). In the *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review* (and *TribLive.com*), Dave DeSimone (who attended the November 2011 press trip) describes fall-inspired wine pairings, including a grilled Comté sandwich with a Domaine Paul Thomas Sancerre.
- **"101 Best Cheeses."** *Culture* (circulation: 60,000). *Culture* magazine features a list of their "101 best cheeses," including Comté AOC, Arnaud QST.
- **"Pairing Wine and Cheese, Made Easy."** Meg Maker, *Maker's Table* blog (readership n/a). On *Maker's Table*, Meg Maker offers tips and tools for pairing wine with cheese, including Comté.

November

- **"Comté."** Laura Werlin, *LauraWerlin.com* (readership n/a). On her blog, Laura Werlin (who attended the June 2013 press trip) describes her trip to the Comté region and explains in detail the Comté production process, including photos at each stage.

December

- **"Chefs' Party Traditions."** *Food & Wine* (circulation: 940,000). *Food & Wine* features chefs' holiday traditions, featuring Chef Ken Oringer's tradition of hosting a fondue party, which he makes using Comté.

ⁱ CNAOL – French Council for Geographical Indications in the Dairy Sector