

PRESS RELEASE

Geneva

28 May 2009

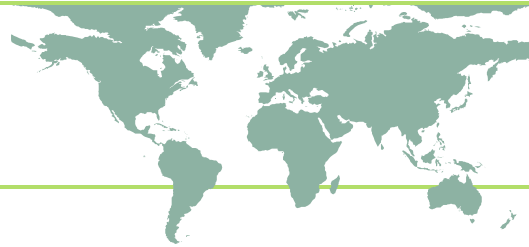
The Future of the European Quality Policy: the European Commission's recipe misses key Geographical Indications' ingredients

Geneva - May 28, 2009. OriGIn, the global coalition of Geographical Indications' (GIs) producers, welcomed today's Communication of the European Commission on the future of the agricultural product quality policy. OriGIn members believe that most of the policy options presented by the Commission serve the cause of promoting the competitiveness of the European agriculture through quality and are committed to continue working hand in hand with the Commission and government officials for a successful policy review.

The members of OriGIn also believe that there is further and constructive work to be done in certain areas mentioned by GI stakeholders to improve the overall system of origin products and not yet tackled by the Commission. For instance, the absence of proposals concerning the role of producers' organizations in the overall management of GIs, which is a key success factor so that producer stakeholders assume a leading role in their GI system and the responsibility of its success. This issue, and in particular the management of production quota, is considered by producers strategic for the future of GIs, as stressed in the OriGIn's contribution to the Green Paper in 2008. *"While producers' organizations are at the very heart of the system, the EU legislation does not recognize them any role in the management of GIs. In an increasingly volatile and competitive market, we consider that, like trademark owners, producers' organizations must have the opportunity to have a say on the management of production as well on the protection and promotion of GIs. This is pivotal, if we are to keep the quality and reputation of our products",* stated Mr. Stefano Tedeschi, President of the "Consorzio del Prosciutto di Parma" and Vice-President of OriGIn.

In addition, OriGIn disagrees with some of the ideas the Commission wishes to explore to simplify the European GI system, such as merging the concepts Protected Denomination of Origin (PDO) and Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) into a single instrument. *"Simplification is for sure a goal to pursue. Producers have been advocating for this, in particular to speed up the registration process and to make the overall GI system more transparent and user friendly. We believe that merging PDOs and PGIs into a single concept does not contribute to achieve these objectives and provides the wrong signal to GI producers. What we need is a more coherent system that leverages on the specificities of both PDOs and PGIs",* said Mr. Jose Enrique Garrigos, President of the "Consejo Regulador de las IGP Jijona y Turrón de Alicante" and Vice-President of OriGIn.

OriGIn wishes to underline the positive side of today's Communication, and in particular the ideas proposed by the Commission to bring together the current three GI systems for wines, spirits, and agricultural products and foodstuffs into a single regulatory structure, while preserving the specificities of each system. Also, the initiatives to clarify the relations between GIs and other intellectual property rights and to develop guidelines on the use of GIs as ingredients in the sales denomination of processed products are steps into the right direction that were very well received.



Moreover, OriGIn welcomes the Commission's proposals concerning the international protection of GIs, in particular with regard to the need to improve the TRIPS Agreement, to sign bilateral treaties with key trade partners and to include GIs in the scope of the Anti Counterfeiting Trade Agreement. However, to be effective, such an ambitious international strategy needs to be more specific. *"The European Union has been playing a key role in shaping the international legal framework for the protection of GIs. At this stage, targeted initiatives can be taken to promote GIs in third countries through technical assistance and promotion programs so that they appreciate the socio-economic value of this instrument. In the current crucial phase of international negotiations, we will continue to work with the European Commission and with other interested stakeholders in the coming months to ensure that we reach a satisfactory solution to the concerns of our members to enhance the protection of GIs at the multilateral level"*, concluded Mr. Luis Fernando Samper, Director of the Intellectual Property Department at the "Federación Nacional de Cafeteros de Colombia" and President of OriGIn.

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About OriGIn:

The Organisation for an International Geographical Indications Network – OriGIn – is the first international organisation of geographical indications' producers. OriGIn represents some 80 organisations and more than two-million producers.