

OriGIn Matters

Transcript of intervention made by Luis F. Samper at Teruel's GA.

Doña Conchita Catalán, Don Antonio Arrufat Gascon, distinguished authorities and friends,

First of all I would like to thank Enrique Bayona and all the members of Consejo Regulador de la Denominación de Origen Jamón de Teruel, Fernando, Raquel and many others have done an impressive job at hosting OriGIn's General Assembly. Also, I would like to thank OriGIn's staff, Massimo and Ida, who have worked so hard at putting together this event. I would also like to thank, in advance, the translators that will be working so hard in the next two days.

Most of all, I would like to thank and welcome all of you, more than 160 registered attendees from well over 30 countries around the world. Many of you have travelled from many hours to be here, and suffered a number of inconveniences. Our deep appreciation to all of you.

This is my last speech as President of OriGIn, as my term expires in this General Assembly. As you know, a new President, and the Vice presidents and Technical Committee members will be elected tomorrow. It has been a source of pride to be your president and to have been joined by fine and impressive individuals willing to give their time, and even their personal resources, to work for OriGIn. You have been a source of both inspiration and satisfaction.

I believe there is no better place to host this General Assembly than Teruel. As you probably have seen in the documents and references to this fine city, "Teruel connects the past with the future". Although OriGIn is a young organization, we already have a past. And we can proudly say that our past, although recent, has a lot to show.

OriGIn has become a partner, not an antagonist, to all relevant actors that relate to Geographical Indications. We have held many and fruitful conversations with INTA, WIPO, many NGO's, government officials from many countries, Intellectual Property offices. Many actors are taking note of our views and interests. These are, I underline, our own views.

As a result of this willingness to work and communicate, we progressively have more and more cooperation projects and are part of widespread initiatives. Many of this cooperation projects will be explained during our budget discussion tomorrow. We also had a key role in helping to assemble the so-called draft modalities agreement, also known as the "majority proposal", to which 110 countries adhered to during the Doha discussions. We are actively participating in the WIPO's recently launched Lisbon Agreement review. The public speaking engagements of our members and OriGIn's staff are becoming more and more frequent, to the point that one could argue that there is no seminar, symposium or workshop dealing with the subject of Geographical Indications that can be considered complete without OriGIn's participation and its private sector views.

These were just some examples of our past. Let me turn now to our future. I believe that being able to assemble the finest minds and individuals that work on a day to day basis on the subject of GI's and that have the relevant experience in many countries, legislations and organizations constitutes a great advantage and assures OriGIn a great future. It is up to us to shape this future. We have the opportunity, during this General Assembly, to actively participate in the discussions related to our next two years action plan. Let me share with you some ideas as to what the future may include in OriGIn's work.

I believe that international GI registrations will no longer be a taboo subject. Witness Tequila's application in Colombia, Changra and Darjeeling Tea in the European Union, or Café de Colombia in Switzerland, just a few examples of what is taking place and, with OriGIn's help, could continue to take place in the future.

I also believe that OriGIn will continue to play an important role in following up and helping to shape the debate in many important policy issues. I am not just talking about the WTO or WIPO, but other debates, such as the discussion on the Green Paper on Agricultural Products Quality currently taking place in the European Union. We shall keep in mind that these debates, that might be looked as an European only exercise to which all of our European members are interested, is also an European debate that could clearly have global implications, to which all of us need to be aware of.

OriGIn will increasingly become certainly be a fine resource to many of you in supporting discussions with your national governments in the many bilateral and plurilateral treaties that are now being negotiated or might be negotiated in the future. The subject of GI legislation and implementation of GI rules in domestic markets will also be part of OriGIn's core expertise to be shared among members.

I also believe that new services to our diverse membership is part of OriGIn's future. We need to be creative and not focus only on policy issues. Provide marketing services to members in topics such as participations of fairs and events, elevating the consumer's perception and interest of GI's through media campaigns and press interviews, and many other initiatives to optimize the marketing costs of our membership should be part of our agenda. The contest we are hosting tomorrow with chefs using OriGIn products as ingredients is part of this initiative. But we should be more inventive in these "new services category". Our rural products have both environmental and social advantages that should be not only promoted, but also capitalized by thinking about how we can become actors in topics that range from carbon credits to water consumption.

I know this may sound overly ambitious. Just remember that three years ago, our friend Louis Fleury, then in charge of OriGIn's finances, told us that we had no money in the bank, and that it would take a lot of work and effort to have a stable and self sustaining organization. Just look where we are now. An active organization that has its own agenda, and looks confident and ready to accept new challenges, some of which are already mentioned in the draft Teruel Declaration prepared by our Technical Committee for you to review.

In sum, I believe that we can jointly say that we have a lot to show to our members. And not only to our members. To more and more people and institutions around the world we have become more and more relevant. To more and more actors OriGIn does matter.

Why does Origin matter?

Origin matters because it has to do with quality of life

Origin matters because it is a way to link consumers and producers

Origin matters because it deals with quality and conservation

Origin matters because it is strongly linked to ones culture

Origin matters because without it sustainability is just a vague, marketing word

Origin matters because it assures the quality and reputation of products

Origin matters because it is part of our self esteem

Origin matters because we have the elements to ensure food security and are ready to answer hard questions

Origin matters because it deals with differentiation.

We can proudly say that we are all here because our own origin matters to us. It matters to our communities and it matters to the world as a whole

Our organization, aptly named OriGIn, is therefore poised to grow. It shall be no surprise to anyone, because OriGIn does matter.

Thanks.