

PRESS RELEASE

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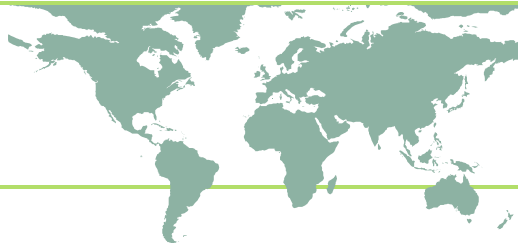
The “Green Paper on agricultural product quality” and the future of Geographical Indications (GIs)

Following the recent publication by the European Commission of the “Green Paper on agricultural product quality”, a round table on the future of Geographical Indications (GI) in the European Union was held in Brussels on 3 December. The event was organized by oriGIn (the Organisation for an International Geographical Indications Network), in cooperation with CNAOC (la Confédération Nationale des Appellations d’Origine Contrôlée) and Mrs. Maria Petre, Member of the European Parliament and “rapporteur” on the Green Paper. Some 100 representatives of GI producers’ associations, the current French Presidency of the EU, the future Czech Presidency of the EU, the European Commission, various Ministries and public institutions, law firms and advocacy groups participated in the round table.



OriGIn and CNAOC welcomed the initiative of the Commission and expressed their views on the Green Paper, focusing on Chapter II, which is mainly devoted to GIs. The two organizations agreed on a number of measures that would optimize the protection and promotion of GIs at EU level: opposition to the proliferation of EU quality logos, application of existing EC rules concerning the obligation for trademark offices to refuse applications identical or confusingly similar to protected designations of origin (PDOs) and/or protected geographical indications (PGIs), and urgent need to adopt measures to ensure the concrete implementation by Member States of the so-called “ex officio” protection of GIs, strengthen the role of producers’ associations in the management and protection of GIs and secure more effective rules concerning GIs at the WTO level.

“With regard to Regulation 510/2006 on the protection of geographical indications and designations of origin for agricultural products and foodstuffs, there is an urgent need to clarify the procedures for the concrete implementation by national authorities of the ex officio protection of GIs. Given the very nature of GIs and the limited financial resources available to many associations of producers, the ex



officio protection is a crucial element of the overall system”, said Mr. Stefano Fanti, Director General of the “Consorzio del Prosciutto di Parma” and representative of the Vice-Presidency of oriGIn for Western Europe.



“The EU system does not confer substantial rights to GI producers’ organizations. This is not satisfactory as in many countries these organizations carry out a key role in the protection and promotion of their GIs. If you look at the trademark system, trademarks’ owners can take measures to control their products in the various phases of production and distribution. On the other hand, GI producers are only allowed to work on quality at the production level and are given limited means to control the way their PDOs/PGIs are used at the distribution and retail level. For instance, under the current circumstances, ensuring that the use of a GI product in prepared food does not tarnish the reputation of the respective protected name is an extremely difficult task for producers’ associations, stated Mr. Fanti.

The round table was also an opportunity to touch upon the burning issue of the current WTO negotiations on GIs. *“The most effective way for the EU to help its producers protect their GIs in third countries is strengthening the WTO rules. The EU should increase its efforts to obtain the extension of article 23 of the TRIPS Agreement to all products and the establishment of a truly Multilateral Register for all GIs. This is extremely urgent, in light of the recent acceleration of the Doha Round negotiations and the continuous efforts of a minority of WTO Member States to leave the key issue of GI extension out of the Single Undertaking, as well as, from the point of view of the overall negotiation, the important concessions that the EU is ready to make in terms of agricultural subsidies and tariffs, said Mr. Federico Moncunill Gallo, Secretary General of the “Consejo Regulador de Jijona y Turrón de Alicante”, and representative of the Vice-Presidency of oriGIn for Western Europe.*

For more information:

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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.