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WTO Members Discuss GIs As EU Proposes Higher Regional Protection

By Catherine Saez on 13 December 2010 @ 6:14 pm

World Trade Organization members last week agreed to work on a draft text for an international register of geographical indications for wines and spirits by April 2011. Meanwhile, the European Commission took steps last week to raise GI protection within the region.

An informal WTO meeting on negotiations for an international register for wines and spirits took place on 10 December, with members agreeing to work on a draft text before the end of the first quarter of 2011, according to sources.

The negotiations on a multilateral register for wines and spirits GIs are held in the framework of the WTO Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS). Geographical indications are product names associated with a particular place and characteristic.

These talks are part of a new push by WTO members to finish the Doha round of trade liberalisation talks by the end of 2011. WTO Director General Pascal Lamy announced at a Trade Negotiations Committee meeting on 30 November "an intensive work programme ^[1]". "With this timing in mind, I believe there is now a collective sense emerging that revised texts in all areas of the negotiation will have to be developed so that they appear towards the end of the first quarter of 2011," Lamy said.

The chair of the informal session, Darlington Mwape, of Zambia proposed a plan to produce the negotiating group's first draft text by 31 March 2011, sources said.

The discussion followed along six focal points, including notification and registration modalities, the legal effects of registration, the fees and cost involved in a registration, special treatment for developing countries, and whether participation will be voluntary, according to the WTO website ^[2].

Further informal consultations will be organised to discuss each topic with the aim of producing a text for each, before addressing the next topic. The first topic, on notification, will be discussed in the week of 10 January, according to the WTO, with a possible meeting of the full membership on 13 January.

According to the WTO, formal meetings will be held "before or after the regular TRIPS Council meetings" expected to be on Tuesday-Wednesday 1-2 March, Tuesday-Wednesday 7-8 June, Tuesday-Wednesday 25-26 October."

European Commission Adopts "Quality Package 2010"

On 10 December, the European Commission adopted a "quality package 2010 ^[3]" for food and agricultural products in the framework of agricultural product quality policy. The quality package aims at guaranteeing "quality to consumers and securing fair prices for farmers," according to a Commission release.

Included in this package, a new "Agricultural Product Quality Schemes Regulation," reinforcing protected designations of origin (PDOs) and protected geographical indications (PGIs), and introducing a new framework for the development of Optional Quality Terms, such as "feeding method," and "territorial origin," according to the release.

The legislative proposals have been forwarded to the European Parliament and the European Council for discussion and adoption, which is expected by 2012, according to the Commission.

The Organization for an International Geographical Indications Network (oriGIn), said it

welcomed some of the proposals presented by the Commission, but regretted the lack of proposals concerning the management of production volumes, which they consider as a key mechanism to ensure quality, according to a [press release](#) ^[4] [pdf].

"If the EU considers the development of PDOs and PGIs as a strategic objective, then the organisations in charge of them must be allowed to manage the development of their markets in a harmonious way," oriGIn vice-president José Enrique Garrigos, and president of the "Consejo Regulador de las IGP Jijona y Turrón de Alicante," said in the release.

Kaitlin Mara contributed to this story.

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[3] quality package 2010: http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/quality/policy/quality-package-2010/index_en.htm

[4] press release: [http://www.origin-](http://www.origin-gi.com/images/stories/PDFs/English/OriGIn_publications/Press_release_oriGIn_10_12_10.pdf)

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