

**Phil HOGAN**

Member of the European Commission

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Brussels, 09. 01. 2018  
(2017)

*Dear Mr Vermot-Desroches,*

*Dear Mr Vittori,*

*Thank you for your recent letter which addresses the Geneva Act of the Lisbon Agreement on Appellations of Origin and Geographical Indications and a harmonized EU system for the recognition and protection of non-agricultural GIs.*

*For more than twenty years the EU has been following a successful policy of protecting geographical indications (GIs), both on the internal market and in third countries. This policy provides clear benefits to EU operators and is beneficial for growth and jobs.*

*The new Geneva Act is a potentially significant tool in the EU's international strategy for the protection of GIs around the world in addition to the negotiation of bilateral and regional agreements and efforts to promote the protection of GIs in the WTO, especially if the Lisbon system can be extended to new members.*

*I share your view that the ruling of the European Court of Justice of 25 October 2017 should now encourage the EU to take full advantage of the revised Lisbon system. The EU has invested substantial effort and political capital in the revision of the Lisbon Agreement. Therefore, it would seem natural to me that the EU should now pursue the implementation of its existing policy and embrace the prospect of joining the Geneva Act of the Lisbon Agreement. Rapid progress towards EU membership is important for the EU's international agenda on GI protection and I will work to achieve progress in this respect.*

*Mr Claude Vermot-Desroches - President  
Mr Massimo Vittori - Managing Director  
Organization for an International Geographical Indications Network  
Rue de Varembé 1  
CH - 1202 Geneva*

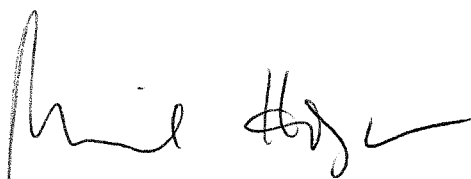
*I also share your view that an EU system for the recognition and protection of non-agricultural GIs would facilitate a prospective EU membership in the Lisbon system. In this respect, the Commission announced in its Communication 'Upgrading the Single Market'<sup>1</sup> that it would take work forward on how to make the most of Europe's traditional know-how in the context of the protection of non-agricultural GIs. In October 2016 the Commission organised, together with the Committee of the Regions, a workshop on the contribution of non-agricultural geographically-rooted products to regional economic development<sup>2</sup>.*

*In addition, the Commission is preparing a study to get further economic and legal evidence on the protection of non-agricultural GIs within the Single Market. This complements an earlier study of 2013<sup>3</sup> and aims to obtain further data on issues such as competitiveness; consumer perceptions; costs/benefits of further protection of non-agricultural GIs as well as on the effectiveness of non-agricultural GI protection models. On the basis of all the data gathered the Commission will decide on concrete further steps.*

*In your letter, you propose a short-term solution for the meantime consisting in the enlargement of the scope of Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012 to additional types of products closely linked to agricultural products or to the rural economy. I understand the reasons and the objectives of your proposal. However, so far Member States have not proactively expressed interest in the use by the Commission of the delegated powers, set out in the Regulation to list additional products in Annex 1 of Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012, and limited in scope. To date, we have also seen scant expressions of interest from any specific sectors or regarding any products that are of any particular importance to the rural economy.*

*In any event, I consider your proposal quite interesting and would welcome further concrete evidence of how this measure could make the GI scheme more attractive to rural producers and consumers, which is specifically highlighted in the recent Communication 'The future of food and farming'<sup>4</sup>.*

*Yours sincerely,*



*Phil HOGAN*

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<sup>1</sup> COM(2015) 550 of 28.10.2015

<sup>2</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/regions-and-cities/2016/doc/draft\\_programme\\_2016.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/regions-and-cities/2016/doc/draft_programme_2016.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/growth/industry/intellectual-property/geographical-indications/non-agricultural-products\\_es](http://ec.europa.eu/growth/industry/intellectual-property/geographical-indications/non-agricultural-products_es)

<sup>4</sup> COM(2017)713, 29.11.2017, [https://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/sites/agriculture/files/future-of-cap/future\\_of\\_food\\_and\\_farming\\_communication\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/sites/agriculture/files/future-of-cap/future_of_food_and_farming_communication_en.pdf)