

oriGIn

The Organization for an International Geographical Indications Network
rue de Varembé 1, 1202 Geneva – CH
EU Transparency Register ID Number: 2292357633-53

Phil Hogan
Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development

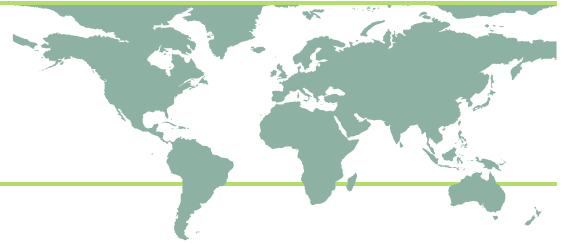
Geneva, 20 December 2017

Re: GIs in the EU-Japan EPA

Dear Commissioner Hogan,

During the negotiations of the EU-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), several of our members have been in touch with the Commission to provide information on the legal and economic issues faced by the Geographical Indications (GIs) they represent in Japan as well as to respond to the oppositions to protection raised by third parties. We do appreciate this approach (which is being implemented in the framework of other FTAs) and would like to express our thanks to you and your team for the cooperation we have established, which promotes transparency in the process and gives the Commission additional elements to optimize negotiating results in the field of GIs.

Following the conclusion of the final discussions on the EU-Japan EPA, we have learnt that for some EU GIs a compromise was required to counter the strong opposition to full protection of the Japanese counterpart. In this respect, we would like to reiterate our strong belief in the principle that any departure from full protection concerning an EU GI in a



foreign jurisdiction cannot be agreed without the informed consent of the concerned GI group. Groups remain the legitimate beneficiaries of the rights deriving from GIs, even when they are negotiated in an FTA. While we understand the dynamics of the negotiation process, which might require last minute compromises, we believe the GI beneficiaries must be informed about compromise solutions under discussion and be given the opportunity to have their views considered. Communication, even in the last negotiation steps, is required when intellectual property rights – with legitimate owners or beneficiaries – are at stake.

We take this opportunity to thank you for the efforts and results achieved by the Commission in the protection of EU GIs in foreign markets. Meanwhile, we remain at your complete disposal should you require any further information and wish you all the best as we race towards the festive season.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Claude Vermot-Desroches'.

Claude Vermot-Desroches
President of oriGIn and President of Comité
Interprofessionnel de Gestion du Comté

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Massimo Vittori'.

Massimo Vittori
Managing Director
oriGIn