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Historic victory for Asiago PDO against "Italian Sounding"
Milan Court of Appeal recognizes protection for Asiago PDO in the United States

In a judgment dated September 25, 2026, the Milan Court of Appeal ruled in favor of the Asiago PDO Cheese Consortium (Consorzio Tutela Formaggio Asiago) in the proceedings brought against Giuseppe Citterio Salumificio S.p.A. and Euro Foods Inc., the group's US company.

Given the cheese's non-Italian origin, the Court of Appeal found the packaging features and marketing communications for a Citterio-branded product named "Sopressata & Asiago Cheese", marketed and advertised in the United States by Euro Foods Inc., with the involvement of Giuseppe Citterio Salumificio S.p.A., to be misleading (so-called "Italian Sounding").

The Milan Court of Appeal, reversing in its entirety the judgment of the Milan Court of May 15, 2023, which had declined jurisdiction without ruling on the merits, granted protection to Asiago PDO in the United States by applying that country's law on misleading advertising. On that basis, it enjoined Giuseppe Citterio Salumificio S.p.A. and Euro Foods Inc. from producing, distributing, importing, exporting, marketing, offering for sale and/or advertising the product "Sopressata & Asiago Cheese", particularly with its associated packaging and advertising material, where these referred to the product's Italian origin and/or manufacture or to the presence of specific organoleptic qualities characteristic of Asiago PDO cheese. It also ordered the payment of damages.

Asiago is currently Italy's fourth-largest cow's milk PDO cheese by production volume and one of the most widely distributed Italian cheese specialties in the world. Each year, approximately 200,000 metric tons of milk from 1,000 farms are processed into cheese. Annual cheese production equivalent to 22,000 metric tons, with sales in more than 50 countries.

As Asiago's market presence and profile have grown, the Consortium has adopted a "zero tolerance" policy, with a particular focus on foreign markets. These are essential to the growth of Asiago and to efforts to combat alleged "Italian Sounding": the use of names, images, colors and references that evoke Italy to promote products that, in reality, have no connection with Italy. Recent estimates put the value of this phenomenon at €73 billion, compared with exports of €71 billion. If converted into actual turnover, this would bring Italy's potential exports to approximately €143 billion (source: TEHA GROUP Ambrosetti analysis of Istat data, 2026).

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The Consortium was represented by the law firm Bird & Bird at both stages of the proceedings.

“We believe this judgment,” said Fiorenzo Rigoni, President of the Asiago PDO Cheese Consortium, “could set an important legal precedent for those who work every day to promote Made in Italy and combat ‘Italian Sounding’. At the Asiago PDO Cheese Consortium, we will continue to build recognition of the distinctive characteristics of the PDO product, which is markedly different from products described as ‘common’, meaning generic, in Asiago cheese’s leading export market and in all the countries where it is appreciated by millions of consumers.”

“This judgment is a positive result not only for Asiago PDO but for all geographical indications,” said Riccardo Deserti, President of Origin, the global alliance of geographical indications, “and shows the central role that protection consortia play in enhancing the value of protected quality products. Particular credit goes to the Asiago PDO Cheese Consortium for its belief in, and investment in, legal protection, recognizing that this is the primary means of supporting and promoting the work of dairies and dairy farmers.”

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