

Press Release

TTIP negotiations: Consortia for the Protection and Trade Associations united to protect geographical indications

The Consortium for the Protection of Asiago Cheese is hoping for recognition of the principle of PDOs and that the USA will create its own marks, linked to the specificity of its products, to promote recognition of the respective indications and stimulate bilateral trade flows.

Vicenza, 5th February 2015 - TTIP (Trans Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership) negotiations between United States and European Union get into full swing. During the eighth round of meetings, held in Brussels from 2nd to 6th February, the stakeholders were able to submit their requests and air their points of view at the Stakeholders' Meeting. These included the Consortium for the Protection of Asiago Cheese, which, besides recognition of the principle of geographical indications, also hoped that the USA would create its own marks, linked to the specificity of its products; recognition of the respective indications would act as an incentive to promote bilateral trade flows.

The representatives of agricultural trade associations, consortia for the protection and non-government bodies, both European and American, spoke at the meetings. Geographical indications were at the heart of the discussions and, above all, of the dispute, as currently the positions on either side of the Atlantic seem difficult to reconcile. Each presentation was followed by a series of questions by the negotiators, aimed at understanding the requests of stakeholder groups and the problems that are presently encountered during exchange activities.

Italy was represented by Leo Bertozzi of the AICIG (Italian Association of Consortia of Geographical Indications), who stressed that American consumers are entitled to the same transparency that EU geographical indication systems offer European consumers, and pointing out the contradictory nature of the United States' position in claiming the right to protect "generic" names. "But if a product is generic", underlined the AICIG representative, "why does it need to be protected or even to adopt the specific name of a territory?"

The Consortium for the Protection of Asiago Cheese participated in the meetings through its Director, Flavio Innocenzi, with a presentation entitled: "socio-economic impact of the production of Asiago cheese and legal aspects that prevent access to the United States market". The Consortium expressed the hope that the Americans, besides recognizing the principle of geographical indications, will also create their own marks, linked to the specificity of their products. "Recognition of the respective indications would have the effect of stimulating trade flows", declared Flavio Innocenzi, "and of toning down the debate on the parasitic exploitation of Italian sounding names and products by American producers, leading to an increase in bilateral trade flows and advantages for both producers and consumers on both sides of the Atlantic".

Representatives of the Consortia of Asiago, Gorgonzola and Parmigiano Reggiano have all confirmed the position of AICIG, Origin, Euro Coop, Copa-Cogeca and of the many trade associations that took turns in underscoring the value and importance of the geographical indications system. The Consortia stated: "if our designations have now become generic in the United States, then we do not understand the need to use them all too often in combination with the Italian flag or other references to Italy".

The viewpoint of the Dairy Export Council is in complete opposition and irreconcilable with the EU position, as the former is against the grandfather clause, according to which the old regulation

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is still applied to some existing situations, while the new regulation is applied to all future cases and to any type of restriction relating to the use of terms that, as generic, represent a common heritage with total freedom of use.

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