



## Press release

### **TTIP negotiations: Asiago PDO launches a reciprocal USA-EU recognition agreement proposal for brands that express the specific qualities of the territories. Presented in Brussels by the Head of the Consortium**

As part of the Trans Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) negotiations between the EU and USA taking place this week in Brussels, the Asiago PDO Cheese Consortium presented a proposal to move beyond the current negotiating positions and reach a reciprocal recognition of the geographical indications and their brands, concerning the specific qualities of the territory; a resource for the sustainable development of the communities and the opportunity to develop bilateral trade flows.

Speaking before European Commission and USA negotiators, Flavio Innocenzi, Director General of the Protection Consortium emphasised the value that the production of Asiago PDO represents for its territory and the local and territorial elements that make this cheese, produced in 2014 in 1,626,000 cheese wheels, a unique “system”. The production turnover is 150 million Euros generating consumer sales of almost 300 million Euros, with overall benefits in terms of business volume for the territory estimated in the region of 750 million Euros and with 8,500 workers in the production chain.

During the meeting, the story of the Asiago PDO tradition became the starting point for illustrating the advantages and opportunities that recognition of the specific qualities could offer producers and consumers on both sides of the Atlantic. For Americans, the move from generic or "common" names to specific brands would mean creating good examples of appreciation of production cultures, expressly linked to their territory of origin, with positive benefits on the renown of the product and its production area, as happened in Italy, where PDO products are the main driver of local tourism and the source of creation of an economic benefit. At the same time, as already proven by experience, this choice would make it possible to increase the opportunities for working together and exchanging good practices, tackling from a new point of departure also the issue of the copycat use of names and Italian sounding products and finding new and valuable supporters in American makers of products with their own brand names.

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#### **Consorzio Tutela Formaggio Asiago**

sede legale: Piazzale della Stazione 1 - 36012 Asiago (VI)  
sede amministrativa: Corso Fogazzaro, 18 - 36100 Vicenza (VI)  
Registro Imprese di Vicenza n. 00703580241 - C.F./P.I. 00703580241 - REA 148240  
Tel: +39 0444 321758 - Fax: +39 0444 326212  
info@formaggioasiago.it - www.formaggioasiago.it - PEC tutelasiago@legalmail.it



In its address, the Protection Consortium also reminded those present that, for products of the European Union as well as for those of the United States, clarity regarding the reciprocal origins – as well as being a duty towards consumers - brings mutual advantages, such as a potential increase in the flow of bilateral trade flows; a possible goal that is nevertheless based on an agreement which prevents at the outset the misleading use of references to products Made in Italy.

“The Europe 2020 Strategy focuses on aspects such as inclusivity and sustainable development, i.e. precisely the same issues on which Geographical Indication products are based, that view being rooted in the territory as a fundamental element. The causal nexus between the production area and the qualitative characteristics of the products is exactly the element that distinguishes Asiago cheese just like all PDO products. By virtue of this capacity to create value for entire local communities” – stated Flavio Innocenzi – “we ask that the European Institutions intensify their efforts to protect a heritage which, even more importantly than economic, is of a social and cultural nature. Protecting the consumer against the standardisation of taste and mass production as a result of delocalisation choices in a desperate attempt to optimise costs, is today more than ever a priority, not just for Protection Consortiums, but also for the community institutions”.

Agreement and endorsements of the proposal were expressed by the major Protection Consortiums present at the meeting, as well as the Italian Association of Geographical Indication Consortia (AICIG) and oriGIn.

Media contact: Roberta Zarpellon -TRAGUARDI - Ple Cadorna 40 - 36061 Bassano del Grappa VI 0424523073 3394187543 [zarpellon@traguardiweb.it](mailto:zarpellon@traguardiweb.it)

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