



## Press Release

### **The Consortium for the Protection of Asiago Cheese paves the way for protection of PDOs in China**

Italian Minister, Maurizio Martina, stated that: “The distinctiveness of Made in Italy agrifood products in world markets depends on the fight against counterfeiting and on a new strategy aimed at spreading awareness of our genuine PDO and PGI products”. According to the President, Fiorenzo Rigoni, “the Consortia for the Protection are already playing their part. It is now time for a global approach forming part of a policy aware of the economic value of PDOs.”

Vicenza, 16th November 2016 – at one of the most important Chinese agrifood exhibitions, FHC CHINA, which took place from 7 to 9 November in Shanghai, the Consortium for the Protection of Asiago Cheese paved the way for increased protection of PDOs through effective action against a series of American products in clear breach of the ASIAGO brand, registered in China. After being reported by the Consortium, the products of three US companies were removed from the stands during the exhibition.

The Italian Minister of Agricultural, Food and Forestry Policies, Maurizio Martina, declared that: “Made in Italy agrifood products have always been synonymous with excellence and their distinctiveness within global markets also depends on the fight against counterfeiting. We must remain extremely vigilant in this sector and for this reason I wish to thank the Consortium for the Protection of Asiago Cheese for its work to defend a key product of Made in Italy and of the whole Italian agrifood chain”. Martina continued by saying: “Our country is a leader in the field of controls - we have a brand new action strategy, aimed not only at repression but also at spreading awareness of our genuine PDO and PGI products. At the same time we are using innovative methods to monitor the web, through agreements entered into with the leading e-commerce companies. There is still a great deal to do and in this battle tangible cooperation with manufacturers and consortia is essential. We wish to put a stop to those who usurp our brands, damaging both Italian companies and consumers looking for Italian quality.”

According to Fiorenzo Rigoni, President of the Consortium: “With their strength, the Consortia are achieving significant success with regard to protection, but it is now essential to join forces and obtain aware political recognition of the economic, social and cultural value of PDO products, with full application of EU Regulation no. 1151/2012, according to which the protection of geographical indications is a tool for protecting “the living cultural and gastronomic heritage” of the EU, as established by Article 3 of the Treaty, which establishes that the cultural heritage of the EU must be protected and its value enhanced. This comes at a time in which the closure of bilateral negotiations between the EU and its strategic business partners must take account of heavy growth in Asian economies in a global context and of strong international pressures to attribute protected designations of origin to simple generic products.”

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It is in this scenario that the success of the action taken by the Consortium for the Protection of Asiago Cheese against American producers in clear breach of the Asiago PDO brand, registered and protected in China, sets an important precedent, while awaiting entry into force of the bilateral agreement between the EU and China for the mutual protection of geographical indications, which have exceeded 1,800 in that country. In the meantime, the global axis of the demand for products and services and of related trade flows continues to shift to the east, as indicated by the recent signing of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) between the USA, Canada and major Asian markets (excluding China), which concerns 40% of global economy and involves over 800 million people.

The Chinese market has enormous proportions: in 2015, the world export of cheeses to China increased by 46.6%, exceeding a growth of 44% in 2014 and 26% in 2013. As regards Italy, quantities are still low, but trends indicate a very dynamic market, with a development of almost 17% in the last year, mainly for fresh cheeses, and in which Asiago PDO only started to market its product recently.

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