Chobani Loses Greek Yogurt Legal Battle in UK

SYLVIA HUI, Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — It's not all Greek to yogurt makers.

A British court has ruled that Chobani, the company leading the burgeoning Greek yogurt market in the U.S., cannot label its products "Greek" in the U.K. because they are made in America.

Chobani said Wednesday it was disappointed with the ruling, but added that "the fight is not over" and it would continue the legal battle.

The court case was brought by Chobani's rival Fage, a Greek company, soon after New York-based Chobani launched their products in the U.K. in 2012. Fage has dominated sales of Greek yogurt in Britain under the "Total" brand for decades.

A judge ruled last year that Chobani's "Greek yogurt" label misled British customers, agreeing with Fage that products labeled Greek yogurt — which is made by straining off the whey to achieve a thick and creamy texture — have to be made in Greece.

Justice Michael Briggs also granted an injunction preventing Chobani from labeling their product "Greek yogurt" in Britain.

Chobani appealed that decision, but a panel of three judges at the Court of Appeal dismissed it on Tuesday.

The company said it would appeal again, this time to the Supreme Court.

"We remain of the view that the population of the U.K. know and understand Greek yogurt to be a product description regardless of where it is made," it said in a statement. "We remain committed to the U.K. market and to breaking the monopoly on the use of the term Greek yogurt enjoyed by Fage."

Chobani, which was first launched in 2007, has grown rapidly since then to become the top seller of Greek yogurt in the U.S.

The company withdrew its products from British shelves last year, saying at the time that it wanted to relaunch later with local sourcing credentials.

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