Group Calls for Common Sense in EU Cheese Name Talks

DENVER (PRWEB) — American cheesemakers are a creative and innovative bunch. They are also traditionalists in how they approach the history of cheese and the methods used to create cheeses with those rich histories. Much of that history stems from Europe. When European immigrants came to the New World centuries ago, they brought with them the recipes and traditions of preserving milk by making it solid. Cheeses were known by the names brought over from the continent, and over the course of hundreds of years, the names have become generic in the minds of consumers. Brie, havarti, ricotta, parmesan, cheddar…these names have become identifiers of types of cheeses that are now known commonly and widely throughout the world.

“Many world-famous cheeses gained popularity with consumers precisely because versions made by immigrants abroad were readily available to a New World audience,” says ACS President, Greg O’Neill of Chicago’s Pastoral Artisan Cheese, Bread and Wine. “Pastoral serves and sells great cheeses from around the globe. We and our customers value the variety and uniqueness of these cheeses, and respect specific geographical indications that are protected. But to best serve cheesemakers and consumers,” O’Neill continues, “a common sense approach must apply to names in long-standing common usage. After building the awareness, appreciation, and availability of such cheeses, it would be detrimental to eliminate the broad, universally-understood language of cheese.”

Any international trade agreement exists to remove borders, expand markets, and lift barriers to consumer access to products. Such an agreement cannot truly be free and respectful of the spirit of “free trade” if restrictions are placed on long-standing products and product names that ostensibly limit trade in a new way within the framework of “free trade.” Common sense should prevail over nationalism and protectionism in this realm, and as such, ACS, on behalf of its 1,500 cheese industry members, hopes that the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) [1] will be built upon a few basic tenets:

- Recognize, respect, and value the hard work of cheesemakers around the globe.
- Value and honor geographical indications of cheeses, such as AOC and DOP, as very strict, clearly defined classifications that protect specific, regional cheeses in Europe and must not be used for any cheeses that do not meet the stringent geographic and manufacturing protocols proscribed. Cheeses like Parmigiano-Reggiano and Brie de Meaux should be protected as the original, historical precursors of more generically named parmesan and brie.
- A belief that free trade cannot truly be free if restrictions are placed on existing products that limit consumer access and understanding. Free trade

should open borders and allow nations to more easily and affordably share resources and products.
- An expectation that all cheeses be clearly marked with country of origin so that consumers are fully aware of where products are made and exactly what they are purchasing.

Great cheese and great cheesemakers deserve recognition for their work, and also the ability to continue that work unimpeded by the semantics and politics of international trade negotiations.

About the American Cheese Society (ACS)

ACS is the leading organization supporting the understanding, appreciation, and promotion of artisan, farmstead, and specialty cheeses produced in the Americas. At 1,500 members strong, ACS provides advocacy, education, business development, and networking opportunities for cheesemakers, retailers, enthusiasts, and extended industry. ACS strives to continually raise the quality and availability of cheese in the Americas. Since its founding in 1983, ACS proudly hosts the foremost annual educational conference and world-renowned cheese judging and competition in North America.

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