

## **U.S. Senate: EU Attempt to Restrict Food Names Is Unacceptable**

WASHINGTON (CCFN) — The U.S. Senate has sent a strong message to the European Union (EU) that it will not tolerate the EU's efforts to restrict U.S. production and exports through use of overly restrictive geographical indications (GIs), or protected food names.

In a strongly bipartisan message, 55 senators delivered a letter to U.S. Trade Representative Michael Froman and Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack urging them to defend common names, especially as U.S. negotiators go back to the table with the EU this week to work on the Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP).

"On behalf of food producers around the world, we thank the senators for joining us in shining a spotlight on the harm that the EU's predatory approach to GIs is causing internationally," stated Errico Auricchio, Chairman of the Consortium for Common Food Names (CCFN), an international non-profit alliance. "Producers everywhere — whether in the United States, Costa Rica, Guatemala or Germany — have a right to use names that have been in the public domain."

"This letter helps call attention to a fast-growing type of agricultural trade barrier that is challenging not only U.S. farmers and businesses but also those in many other countries around the world," declared CCFN Executive Director Jaime Castaneda. "We applaud the U.S. Senate's message on this issue of such significant international concern."

The letter commends the work the Administration has done to date in recognizing the efforts by the [EU to restrict the use of such common names as "parmesan" and "feta"](#). [1] but warns that the EU is becoming increasingly aggressive in erecting these trade barriers. When food producers are unable to use common food names in either domestic or international trade, it severely hampers their ability to compete in established markets. The EU's predatory efforts to dramatically limit options in the marketplace also confuse consumers by removing available products from the market and suggesting that there is only one place to get a given product, when in reality many choices exist.

For example, some U.S. cheese manufacturers have been making award-winning cheeses with common names like "asiago" and "muenster" for decades. These cheesemakers often proudly label their products as "Made in America" while giving a nod to the historic origins of the cheese. In this way they and their counterparts in dozens of countries around the world have done the lion's share of the work building markets for these products, thereby expanding demand for products made in both Europe and in many other nations.

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"We urge you to make clear to your EU counterparts that the U.S. will reject any proposal in the [TTIP] negotiations now underway that would restrict in any way the ability of U.S. producers to use common cheese names," the letter states.

Castaneda noted that, "While the letter focuses on cheese, which has been particularly hard hit by the EU's most recent efforts, European GIs encompass many food and beverage categories, meaning many areas of food trade worldwide are potentially threatened by the EU's unfair claims to the exclusive use of common food names and common-place terms such as "classic", "ruby" and "chateau".

"In country after country, the EU has been using its free trade agreements (FTAs) to persuade its trading partners to impose barriers to U.S. exports under the guise of protection for its geographical indications," the letter states.

For example, Canada agreed as part of its recently concluded FTA with the EU to impose new restrictions on the use of "feta" and other common cheese names. The EU has instigated similar trade barriers throughout Latin America, and is expected to pursue such restrictions in its negotiations with many Asian countries.

"We ask that USTR and USDA continue to work aggressively to ensure the EU's GI efforts on commonly used cheese names do not impair U.S. businesses' ability to compete domestically or internationally and that you make this a top priority through both official TTIP and bilateral negotiations," the letter concludes.

The full letter can be found [here](#) [2] on the CCFN website, [www.CommonFoodNames.com](http://www.CommonFoodNames.com) [3].

*The Consortium for Common Food Names (CCFN) is an independent, international non-profit alliance whose goal is to work with leaders in agriculture, trade and intellectual property rights to foster the adoption of high standards and model geographical indication guidelines throughout the world. Those interested in joining can find information at [www.CommonFoodNames.com](http://www.CommonFoodNames.com) [4].*

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