EU's 'Havarti' Cheese Name Regulation Sparks Controversy

The Consortium for Common Food Names

Washington D.C. — The Consortium for Common Food Names (CCFN) is calling on the European Union (EU) to make the right decision on a controversial geographical indication (GI) proposal that would grant Denmark exclusive use of the name 'havarti' in the EU. CCFN filed its comments late last week in objection to the proposal as part of the EU's GI review process.

"We expect the European Commission to do the right thing, and respect the common name 'havarti', which is used around the world. As we have seen in other cases, there are ways to protect the names of geographical specialty foods and beverages without impeding the rights to use generic food names," said Jaime Castaneda, CCFN executive director.

"If the EU ultimately registers this GI, it would be one of the most egregious examples of Europe's GI policy gone wrong," he added. "The name 'havarti' is not only widely used in many European and non-European countries, but there is also an international product standard for havarti that is recognized globally by Europe and others. If a GI for 'havarti' is approved, the EU will clearly be over-stepping a very significant boundary that threatens the free flow of commerce and harms food producers. It would set a terrible precedent."

A Codex Alimentarius standard was established for havarti in 2007 - with Europe's approval. These international standards play an important role in preventing barriers to trade. The Codex standard was established in part due to significant international production of havarti, demonstrating the fact that this cheese is produced and marketed in many countries throughout the world.

"The havarti application directly undermines this recognized international standard. If the EU moves forward with this application, it will call into question the EU's commitment to the international standard-setting process," said Castaneda. "It will also suggest that no common food name - from 'bologna' to 'pizza' - is safe from EU over-reach and continual expansion of its GI system."

CCFN argues that a better model for GIs can be seen in recent EU rulings on "Gouda Holland", "Orkney Scottish Island Cheddar" and "Holsteiner Tilsiter" where the approved GIs are protected only as complete names. In these cases the approval notice contains clear language stating that the generic names 'gouda', 'cheddar' and 'tilsiter' are not restricted in the EU under these applications.

The EU has been increasingly aggressive in moving past the concept of protected geographical and specialty names such as "Parmigiano Reggiano" to seek exclusive use of the common term related to the name, such as "parmesan", or simply to

claim ownership of a common name, as in "feta". In recent trade deals the EU has acquired restrictions on the use of "feta", "asiago", "gorgonzola" and other cheese names in Korea and Canada; and restrictions on the use of the names "parmesan" and "provolone" in Costa Rica, for example. Many other trade negotiations are ongoing, including the EU-U.S. Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP).

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 *[1].*

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