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U.S. and EU Producers Seek Pragmatic Solutions to GIs Issues in the T-TIP

BRUSSELS / WASHINGTON, DC – American and European producers of geographical indications (GIs) have a lot in common in terms of challenges they are facing in today’s global market. The stakeholders event held today in Brussels at the occasion of the 10th round of the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (T-TIP) negotiations between the European Union (EU) and the United States (U.S.) has been an opportunity for them to voice once again their concerns.

In Brussels, Sébastien Breton, Director of the Conseil national des appellations d’origine laitières (CNAOL), focused his speech on the contribution of GIs to rural development. He stated that “GIs are an important tool for rural development, especially in less favored areas. In the French GI cheese sector, 70% of the volumes are produced in mountainous areas. As by definition GI businesses cannot be outsourced, GIs are crucial to generate maintain direct and indirect jobs in such areas. Without adequate legal protection though all of this is at stake.”

Christian Amblard, General delegate of the Syndicat du Pruneau d’Agen, took the example of the prune industry to show how GIs from both sides of the Atlantic share common interests and values. “Pruneaux d’Agen and California Dried Prunes show how GIs have the potential to structure a given market so that consumers, growers and all the food chain benefit from the generated wealth. But in today’s world, high legal and enforcement costs represent a serious obstacle to the competitiveness of GIs”, said Mr. Amblard.

While many European members of oriGIn directly participated in the stakeholders event, representatives of U.S. GIs closely followed the discussions from Washington, DC. Butch Weege, President of the American Origin Products Association (AOPA), invited U.S. negotiators to look at GIs in the T-TIP as an opportunity to address the legal challenges U.S. GIs face in their country of origin as well as in the EU market. “As a matter of fact, American GIs have to face high enforcement costs and increasing misuse in the U.S. For the ones protected through certification marks, there can be obstacles to lodging a GI application in the EU. We believe that these issues can be addressed in an ambitious free trade agreement such as the T-TIP. We need to find innovative solutions that serve real GIs on both sides.”

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