



## Commission strengthens geographical indications to preserve high quality and reinforce protection

Brussels, 31 March 2022

Today, the European Commission adopted its [proposal to review the geographical indications \(GIs\) system](#) for wine, spirit drinks and agricultural products. The new measures should increase the uptake of GIs across the Union to benefit the rural economy and achieve a higher level of protection, especially online. The aim is to maintain the EU's high food quality and standards and ensure that our cultural, gastronomic and local heritage is preserved and certified as authentic within the EU and across the world.

Agriculture Commissioner Janusz **Wojciechowski** said: "*Geographical indications represent the wealth and diversity of our European culinary heritage. By proposing today a strengthening and further harmonisation of our legal framework, we want to boost the production of traditional quality products. This will benefit rural economies across the Union and contribute to preserving local traditions and natural resources. It will further protect the global reputation of EU agri-food products.*"

The Commission proposes the following measures to strengthen and improve the existing system of geographical indications:

- **Shortened and simplified registration procedure:** the different technical and procedural rules on geographical indications will be merged, resulting in a single simplified GI registration procedure for EU and non-EU applicants. As this harmonisation will result in a shorter time between the submission of the application and the registration, it is expected to increase the attractiveness of the schemes for producers.
- **Increased online protection:** the new framework will increase the protection of GIs on the internet, namely as regards sales via online platforms and the protection against bad faith registration and use of GIs in the domain name system.
- **More sustainability:** as a direct follow-up of the [Farm to Fork strategy](#), it will be possible for producers to valorise their actions regarding social, environmental or economic sustainability in their product specifications by laying down the related requirements. This will contribute to better protecting natural resources and rural economies, securing local plant varieties and animal breeds, conserving the landscape of the production area and improving animal welfare. This could also lead to appealing consumers who want to lower their impact on the environment.
- **Empowered producers' groups:** Member States will have to recognise GI producers' groups at their request. Recognised groups will be empowered to manage, enforce and develop their GIs, notably by having access to anti-counterfeiting authorities and customs in all Member States.

The proposal also re-conducts the quality scheme for [traditional specialities guaranteed](#) and the use of the term '[mountain product](#)' as an optional quality term.

Member States remain in charge of the enforcement at national level, while the Commission remains responsible for the registration, amendment and cancellation of all registrations. The [European Union Intellectual Property Office](#) (EUIPO) will provide technical support in the scrutiny process to help speed up the procedures. The Commission and EUIPO have been cooperating on geographical indications for the last four years, during which EUIPO contributed to assessing around 1,300 GI applications and created [GIview](#), a new search database for all protected names, linked to the EU register of geographical indications.

Today's proposal reflects the result of a broad consultation process. An [inception impact assessment](#) was published in October 2020, followed by a [public consultation](#) open from 15 January 2021 to 9 April 2021, as well as targeted consultations with Member States and relevant organisations in the field.

## Background

Geographical indications protect the names of products from specific regions and with specific characteristics, qualities or a reputation, against copying or fraud and certify that they were made to high standards in their origin region.

An [evaluation](#) published in December 2021 showed that the existing framework is effective and provides a clear EU added value. However, it identified certain limits, such as the low awareness and understanding of GIs by consumers in some Member States as well as low enforcement. It also highlighted that environmental sustainability and animal welfare could be further integrated.

As part of the EU's system of [intellectual property](#), names of products registered as GIs are legally protected against imitation, misuse and evocation within the EU and in non-EU countries where a specific protection agreement has been signed. The Geneva Act related to geographical indications represents an additional, multilateral framework for their protection.

The names of agri-food products and wines are protected as a [Protected Designation of Origin](#) (PDO) and a [Protected Geographical Indication](#) (PGI), and those of spirit drinks as Geographical Indications (GI). Famous geographical indications include, for example, Bayerisches Bier, Champagne, Irish Whiskey, Kalamata olives, Parmigiano Reggiano, Polish Vodka, Queso Manchego, Roquefort. The European Union also protects [Traditional Specialities Guaranteed](#) (TSG), which are the names of the agricultural products highlighting the traditional aspects of a product without being linked to a specific geographical area. Examples of famous TSGs are Bacalhau de Cura Tradicional Portuguesa, Amatriciana tradizionale, Hollandse maatjesharing, and Kriek.

In March 2022, 3,458 names were registered: 1,624 wine names, 1,576 food and agricultural foodstuff names, and 258 spirit drinks. The [most recent study on GIs](#) published in 2020 found that the sales value of a product with a protected name is on average double that for similar products without a certification. This study estimated the yearly sales value of GI-protected products at €74.76 billion annually, with over one fifth of this amount resulting from exports outside the European Union.

## For More Information

[Commission's proposal for a regulation on EU geographical indications for wine, spirit drinks and agricultural products](#)

[Quality schemes explained](#)

[GIview](#)

[eAmbrosia, the EU geographical indications register](#)

IP/22/2185

Press contacts:

[Miriam GARCIA FERRER](#) (+32 2 299 90 75)

[Thérèse LEREBOURS](#) (+32 2 296 33 03)

General public inquiries: [Europe Direct](#) by phone [00 800 67 89 10 11](#) or by [email](#)