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Trump Administration Commits to Continued Staunch Defense of U.S. Food and Beverage Manufacturers Using Common Food Names

(Washington D.C.) – A report on intellectual property issued Friday by the U.S. Trade Representative’s Office (USTR) outlined the Trump Administration’s continuing commitment to curtailing the damaging abuses of geographical indications (GIs) – particularly by the European Union (EU).

The report highlighted ongoing threats to U.S. companies that legally use common food names both within the United States and in global trade. USTR’s annual [Special 301 Report](#) outlined extensive efforts that the administration is making in numerous countries to stem the EU’s efforts to use GIs to erect barriers to U.S. exports.

The U.S. dairy industry joined the Consortium for Common Food Names (CCFN) in hailing the report for sending a strong, positive signal on how the new administration plans to tackle these types of trade and intellectual property issues to preserve jobs and safeguard global opportunities for U.S. companies.

“Many countries protect legitimate GIs, including the United States,” said Jaime Castaneda, executive director for CCFN, an international alliance dedicated to preserving rights to use common food names. “When properly targeted to protect unique regional products, GIs can be a useful intellectual property tool for some producers. But the EU’s approach is far from properly targeted. Rather, it is a system designed to steal commonly used names from those who built markets for those products and monopolize use of those terms in foreign and domestic markets.”

“We appreciate the many positive actions of USTR on this important issue. As trade policy strategy is developed this year, we urge the administration to build further upon the U.S. government’s past successes in pushing back against the EU’s global GI agenda,” said Tom Vilsack, president and CEO of the U.S. Dairy Export Council. “This work should continue to

include both bilateral engagement with our trading partners and incorporation into any trade agreement discussions.”

“We look forward to working with the administration and with governments of other nations on proper regulation of GIs to avoid harmful losses of U.S. cheese sales opportunities. We cannot allow our trading partners to chip away at the value of prior World Trade Organization or free trade agreement concessions through unjustified restrictions on common terms,” said Jim Mulhern, president and CEO of the National Milk Producers Federation.

“Countries that are signing bilateral trade agreements with the European Union have been granting protection for several generic cheese names used in the United States. Those agreements hurt U.S. cheese companies as well as the dairy farmers that supply the milk,” said Michael Dykes, D.V.M., president and CEO of IDFA. “Names like feta and parmesan belong to everyone, not just a small group of producers in Europe. The EU’s bid to gain exclusive rights to these names is totally unjustified. We’re pleased to see the administration take on the important issue of GIs, and we look forward to continuing to work with the USTR on the issue.”

Abuse of GIs could impact a variety of sectors, from dairy, wine and meat to horticulture and rice. The U.S. dairy organizations, CCFN, and wine and grocery industry groups all filed comments to USTR earlier this year expressing concern with the growing threat to U.S. manufacturers of foods with common names. Among the specific requests to the USTR: hold trading partners accountable for their commitments, preserve market access negotiated through earlier trade agreements and prevent competitors from monopolizing widely used generic terms like feta and prosciutto (see CCFN’s [comments](#)).

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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.

The National Milk Producers Federation (NMPF), based in Arlington, VA, develops and carries out policies that advance the well-being of dairy producers and the cooperatives they own. The members of NMPF’s cooperatives produce the majority of the U.S. milk supply, making NMPF the voice of dairy producers on Capitol Hill and with government agencies. For more on NMPF’s activities, visit our website at www.nmpf.org.

The U.S. Dairy Export Council is a non-profit, independent membership organization that represents the global trade interests of U.S. dairy producers, proprietary processors and cooperatives, ingredient suppliers and export traders. Its mission is to enhance U.S. global competitiveness and assist the U.S. industry to increase its global dairy ingredient sales and exports of U.S. dairy products. USDEC accomplishes this through programs in market development that build global demand for U.S. dairy products, resolve market access barriers and advance industry trade policy goals. USDEC is supported by staff across the United States and overseas in Mexico, South America, Asia, Middle East and Europe. The U.S. Dairy Export Council prohibits discrimination on the basis of age, disability, national origin, race, color, religion, creed, gender, sexual orientation, political beliefs, marital status, military status, and arrest or conviction record. www.usdec.org.

The International Dairy Foods Association (IDFA), Washington, D.C., represents the nation's dairy manufacturing and marketing industries and their suppliers with a membership of nearly 525 companies within a \$125-billion a year industry. IDFA is composed of three constituent organizations: the Milk Industry Foundation (MIF), the National Cheese Institute (NCI) and the International Ice Cream Association (IICA). IDFA’s nearly 200 dairy processing members operate more than 600 manufacturing facilities and range from large multi-national organizations to single-plant companies. Together they represent more than 85 percent of the milk, cultured products, cheese, ice cream and frozen desserts produced and marketed in the United States. Visit IDFA at www.idfa.org.