



Council of the
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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Council

Subject: **Agriculture and Fisheries Council** meeting on 14 November 2016
Use of geographical designations for agricultural products not meaning
origin or provenance
- Information from the Greek delegation

Delegations will find attached an information note from the Greek delegation on the above mentioned subject, that will be presented under the agenda point "Any other business".

Use of geographical designations for agricultural products not meaning origin or provenance

Fair trade, transparency, avoidance of misleading consumers, avoidance of unfair commercial practices and the need to protect the legitimate interests of producers, lie at the core of EU policy in the agri-food sector. In addition, the current provisions stipulate that, the labelling of foodstuffs should pursue a high level of protection, not only for reasons of health, but also for the interests of consumers whose choices can be influenced by, inter alia, health, economic, environmental, social and ethical considerations.

In difficult times, when farmers are struggling for their survival, wherever they operate in the EU, particularly in the dairy sector, mutually supportive actions are required within this EU policy context.

It is useful to redefine the concept of mutual recognition and respect. The identity of a country, from its name to its symbols and traditions, is not negotiable. Commercial practices of deception and exploitation of reputation cannot be legitimized against an entire country and its producers.

Specifically, the use of geographical designations, with or without accompanying terms/qualifiers, should not mean anything else than origin or provenance. Any such reference is tantamount to exploitation of the reputation of a genuine product, thus raising questions on the protection of the legitimate interests of producers of the original national product.

In our view, the use of geographical designations on agricultural products and foodstuffs, is inevitably linked to origin or provenance. When implementing the Union's provisions, clarity dictates that geographical designations mean geography and technical terms mean "type" or "style" or "recipe" etc. Any other interpretation allows for misleading practices, thus leading to unfair competition in the market.

The problem becomes even worse, since the overwhelming majority of these geographical designations are misleadingly used, even when accompanied by terms such as "type", "style", etc., and are supplemented by symbols and visual representations that unmistakably refer to a specific country. In any case, even non-protected names under the Union's quality scheme, are not considered automatically customary.

The Commission calls for a "case by case" examination based on objective criteria concerning the use of geographical designations that do not state origin or provenance; this may leave, however, much room for misinterpretation in cases where origin or provenance are clearly implied. Therefore the terms "Greek type" or "style" or "recipe" etc. cannot be considered technical terms.

As relevant surveys and studies have already indicated, the origin labelling is a delicate matter of primary importance for consumers. Thus, it is necessary to develop an appropriate framework which will include objective criteria and guidelines for the above mentioned "case by case examination".