EU-China: Council authorises signature of the agreement on geographical indications

The Council today adopted decisions on the signature of the agreement between the European Union and the government of the People's Republic of China on geographical indications (GIs).

This is the first significant bilateral trade agreement signed between the EU and China.

It will ensure that 100 EU agri-food GIs ("Geographical Indications") such as Mozzarella di Bufala Campana, Languedoc wine, Polska Wódka or Elia Kalamatas get protection on the Chinese market. Likewise, 100 Chinese products will be protected in the EU, thereby ensuring mutual respect of the best of both agricultural traditions.

Four years after its entry into force, the scope of the agreement will expand to cover an additional 175 GI names from both sides. The agreement also includes a mechanism to add more geographical indications thereafter.

Background and process

A GI is a distinctive sign used on products that have a specific geographic origin and possess qualities or a reputation that are due to that origin. The EU-China agreement will therefore provide an important protection of the products' intellectual property rights: it will safeguard against translation, transcription or transliteration, and against the use of the protected geographical indications accompanied by expressions such as "kind", "type", "style", "imitation" or the like in respect of a non-originating product.

GIs have also proven to be a useful marketing tool, helping to ensure higher and more stable export revenues for producers: according to a study commissioned by the Commission in 2013, a geographical indication product sells on average for more than twice the price of a similar non-geographical indication product. Moreover, China is a high-growth potential market for European food and drinks. This agreement will therefore benefit European producers and should be a boost to rural areas where these products are made.

The geographical indications will co-exist with the legitimate earlier trademarks of which the vast majority belong to the legitimate owners of Europe.

On 10 September 2010 the Council authorised the opening of negotiations on an agreement on GIs with China.

The date and place for the signature of the agreement has not been set yet. Once signed, the agreement will then need to receive the consent of the European Parliament before it can be concluded and enter into force.

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European Semester 2020: country-specific recommendations adopted

On 20 July 2020, the Council adopted its 2020 recommendations and opinions on the member states' economic, employment and fiscal policies, as well as the recommendation for the euro-area.

This year's country-specific recommendations take into account the specific context of the COVID-19 pandemic and the activation of the general escape clause under the Stability and Growth Pact on 20 March 2020.

Regarding the short-term measures to mitigate the consequences of the pandemic, the country-specific recommendations reflect the following economic priorities:

- invest in access, effectiveness and resilience of health care;
- preserve employment and address the social impact of the crisis;
- focus on research and development;
- ensure liquidity provisions and the stability of the financial sector;
- preserve the single market and the circulation of goods and services.

In the medium-term, the focus lies on achieving sustainable and inclusive growth while also contributing to the green and digital transition.

The recommendations are provided for all 27 member states, as well as for the UK, which remains part of European Semester analysis until 31 December 2020, in line with the provision of the withdrawal agreement on the transition period.

Today's adoption is the final stage of the 2020 European Semester process. The European Council endorsed the country-specific recommendations and the recommendations for the euro area at its 17-18 July meeting.

Background and process

Introduced in 2010, the European Semester enables the EU Member States to coordinate their economic, fiscal and employment policies throughout the year and address the economic challenges facing the EU.

The Commission assesses EU governments' economic policies and budgetary strategies, based on national reform programmes and stability or convergence programmes provided each year in April.

On this basis, the Commission presents each country with a set of draft country-specific recommendations (CSRs) providing policy guidance on how to boost jobs and growth, while maintaining sound public finances.

The Council then adopts country-specific recommendations (CSRs) and opinions. It provides explanations in cases where the recommendations do not correspond with those proposed by the Commission.

The recommendations can be found in the following documents:

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