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PRESSE RELEASE

Bordeaux, 25th April 2016

AREPO asks for a widespread recognition and strong protection of GIs in TTIP

On April 14th, 2016, the General Assembly of the Association of European Regions for Products of Origin (AREPO) adopted a common position on TTIP negotiations, following the publication of the negotiating documents by the European Commission in March 2016. **AREPO opposes the principle of an *a priori* restricted list of Geographical Indications (GIs) and asks the European Commission for a widespread recognition and strong protection of GIs in TTIP.**

The 1.300 GIs for foodstuffs registered by the European Commission are inalienable rights of collective intellectual property recognized by the European regulatory framework. These products not only represent a whole section of European agricultural and food culture, but also a really important share of rural economy, accounting for an annual turnover of at least 60 billion euros. Moreover, the total value of GIs products exported outside EU is estimated at €15 billion and the US represents by far the leading destination country for EU GIs, accounting for 30% of the total exports from the EU.

For this reason AREPO reminds that GIs are a key interest of the European Union and all registered GIs should be protected in all trade agreements signed by the EU.

AREPO questions the modalities of the democratic process that led to the drafting of the restricted list published by the EC. AREPO members argue that **a significant number of GIs with commercial interests in the US are not included in the list published by the EC.**

In any case, if the conclusion of TTIP negotiations between the EU and US authorities should lead to the definition of an *a posteriori* restricted list of GIs, the included GIs should be selected through a concerted decision. **Thus AREPO urges the European Commission to start a comprehensive consultation of the European GIs, in order to assess their willingness to be protected or not under the TTIP.** Furthermore, AREPO considers extremely important that the registration process in the eventual bilateral register remains open for future GIs.

Finally, AREPO demands that US stops using the names of European GI wines wrongly considered semi-generic. The concerned PDO are typical products, expressions of their territories of origin, with their inherent natural and human factors, and they cannot be considered as a recipe.

AREPO is a network of regions and producer associations. It represents 28 member regions, from 8 different Member States of the EU, and around the 45% of European GIs.

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