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*Committee on Regional Development*

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**2013/2098(INI)**

16.10.2013

## **OPINION**

of the Committee on Regional Development

for the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development

on regional quality branding: towards best practice in rural economies  
(2013/2098(INI))

Rapporteur: Oldřich Vlasák

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## SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Regional Development calls on the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions into its motion for a resolution:

1. Points out that regional quality branding is particularly important for local territories and rural economies, as it highlights the connection to a specific and valuable territory in terms of the origin of products and services, and fosters productive regional economic development; is of the opinion that at a time of globalised economies, regional quality brands can serve as significant promoters of territorial, local and regional identity, on which they should provide essential information, and can contribute to the preservation, transmission and promotion of local and regional traditions, history and territory-specific characteristics, which will help improve the competitiveness and attractiveness of rural territories;
2. Shares the view that regional branding and EU-protected designations have a specific role in areas with certain constraints; acknowledges, in this respect, the role of new designations, such as the newly introduced European label for agricultural products from mountainous regions; calls on the Commission to introduce a similar designation for products from island areas; stresses the importance of regional brands for specific sectors, such as regional creative industries where branding can result in the creation of new cultural products as part of a place-branding process, as well as contribute to the economic progress of those regions;
3. Highlights the cross-cutting nature and added value of regional quality brands which support specific agricultural products as well as handcrafts and craftsmanship, and specific production processes; emphasises the value of cooperation between regional quality brands that is based on interaction between the resources shared by several regional brands at local and regional level and on synergies between neighbouring regional brands; believes that regionally branded products may serve as good companion products and guides to other services provided rurally, such as sustainable tourism, accommodation, catering services etc.; stresses, in this connection, that an integrated and holistic approach to the promotion of regionally branded products and their implementation at local, regional, national and European level is essential; considers that full support should be given to improving the marketing of regional brands and their geographical indications in order to enhance their image both within and outside the EU; stresses the need to avoid the risk of regional brand designations used to label agricultural products being mistaken for current EU designations of origin and geographical indications in the agri-food sector, since products with protected designations must meet specific criteria established by regulatory bodies;
4. Calls on local action groups, within the framework of the Leader + programme, to foster the creation of networks for cooperation between local and regional producers, service providers and cultural institutions such as universities, libraries and research centres, so as to enable the cultural and historical aspects of territories to be combined in regional brands through which lasting links can be forged between training, research and production, thereby also generating employment;

5. Is of the opinion that regional quality branding, based on a territorial bottom-up approach, promotes cooperation and networks between various local economic actors and socio-professional organisations, thanks to which they develop, improve their products and services, and introduce more environmentally-friendly processes; insists that respect for workers' rights and consideration of environmental impacts are particularly important aspects for the quality criterion;
6. Invites the Member States and sub-national entities to take due account of regional quality branding and the role the brands play in rural territories by including them in their local and regional development strategies;
7. Is of the opinion that in order to be successful, regional brands need a necessary critical mass of professionals and funding to be able, inter alia, to develop trade strategies to improve their market presence in Europe and third countries; calls for better and more suitable support of regional brands by the European Structural and Investment Funds; invites the Member States and other relevant bodies to support this approach in their programming documents for the next programming period 2014-2020, including their cross-border programmes; is of the opinion that additional steps to defend regionally branded goods, for example measures to prevent copying or confusion with EU-protected designations of agri-food quality, should be introduced;
8. Points out that for the success of funding received from the European Structural and Investment Funds, the relevant administrative procedures should be made as simple, coherent and straightforward as possible for the beneficiaries;
9. Believes that in order to provide for the increased success of regional quality brands, the exchange of experience, networking and partnerships are essential, as is the historic, cultural and symbolic heritage of a territory; recognises the role of representative bodies, such as associations, at regional, national and European level which provide for the promotion of regional brands and enhance and strengthen the growing region's visibility; calls for greater attention to be paid to regional branding initiatives as a possible common theme in European territorial cooperation and European funding initiatives, and as a tool that represents an investment in the long-term vitality of the region's competitiveness.

## RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE

<b>Date adopted</b>	14.10.2013
<b>Result of final vote</b>	+: 30 -: 0 0: 0
<b>Members present for the final vote</b>	Luís Paulo Alves, Francesca Barracciu, Victor Boștinaru, Nikos Chrysogelos, Danuta Maria Hübner, María Irigoyen Pérez, Seán Kelly, Mojca Kleva Kekuš, Constanze Angela Krehl, Iosif Matula, Jan Olbrycht, Wojciech Michał Olejniczak, Georgios Stavrakakis, Nuno Teixeira, Lambert van Nistelrooij, Oldřich Vlasák, Kerstin Westphal, Hermann Winkler, Joachim Zeller
<b>Substitute(s) present for the final vote</b>	Andrea Cozzolino, Cornelia Ernst, Catherine Grèze, Karin Kadenbach, Maurice Ponga, Elisabeth Schroedter, Richard Seeber, Patrice Tirolien, Giommara Uggias, Derek Vaughan
<b>Substitute(s) under Rule 187(2) present for the final vote</b>	Edvard Kožušník