MEPs want better protection for local products rooted in traditional know-how

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EU-wide protection of geographical indication should be extended from agricultural products to include regionally and locally manufactured goods and handicraft products, MEPs say in a non-binding resolution adopted on Tuesday. This would support local economic development, boost tourism, strengthen consumer confidence and help preserve cultural heritage and traditional know-how.

"I welcome Parliament’s broad support for the call for better protection of local know-how. Extending EU-wide protection of geographical indications would be beneficial not only for consumers, but also for tourism, culture, employment and trade. It is now for the European Commission to take up the case, and I hope it will make the proposals soon, already as part of Commission’s internal market Strategy expected later this fall," said the lead MEP, Virginie Rozière (S&D, FR).

The resolution was adopted by 608 votes to 43, with 43 abstentions.

Call for EU-wide protection of geographical indications

The resolution calls on the Commission to propose legislation to extend EU-wide protection of geographical indications (GI) to include regionally and locally manufactured goods and handicraft products, such as Bohemian glass, Scottish tartan and Carrara marble. The link between the product and the place where it is manufactured is essential in order to identify the specific know-how and designate the quality, authenticity and characteristics of the product, MEPs stress.

Economic potential and assurance of product quality for consumers

In helping to preserve cultural heritage and traditional know-how, an EU-level system of GI protection could have great economic potential and bring significant benefits especially for SMEs and EU regions, say MEPs. It would also enable the EU to enjoy the same protection for such products outside the EU in the framework of international trade negotiations, the text adds.

This system would give consumers reliable information on the place and method of production and help them to make better-informed choices by eliminating the confusion caused by misleading names or descriptions. It would also help to combat counterfeiting, the fraudulent use of names of geographical origin and other unfair practices, say MEPs.

Single European registration system

Producers and their associations and chambers of commerce should be authorized in the first place to apply for registration of geographical indication protection, says Parliament. The mechanism for registering products should be the “most efficient, simple, useful and accessible”, MEPs say and stress that the system should keep costs and red tape for businesses to a minimum.

Note to editors
At EU level, unitary geographical indication (GI) protection is provided for agricultural products from a specific geographical origin possessing certain qualities or made according to traditional methods. At the moment, there is no unitary GI protection for non-agricultural products at EU level. However, 15 EU member states have specific national legislation on GI protection for non-agricultural products resulting in different degrees of protection in the member states.

Procedure: Non-legislative resolution

Facts

- A geographical indication (GI): a sign used to indicate that a product has a specific geographical origin and possesses a certain reputation or qualities due to that place of origin (Source: EC)

Further information

- Adopted text will be available here (click on 06.10.2015): http://www.europarl.europa.eu/plenary/en/texts-adopted.html
- Ebs+: (05.10.2015) : http://ec.europa.eu/avservices/ebs/schedule.cfm?sitelang=en&page=3&institution=0&date=10/05/2015

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