

100 European geographical indications will be protected on the Chinese market

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On 2 June in Brussels, the EU and China officially agreed to publish a list of 200 European and Chinese geographical indications – 100 from each side – whose protection will be ensured through a bilateral agreement that is expected to be concluded in 2017. Bulgarian geographical indications are not included in the list of 100 EU products, although the Centre for Promotion of Agricultural Cooperation between China and Central and Eastern European Countries is headquartered in Bulgaria. Our country is also responsible for the management and coordination of the Centre, which represents a platform, on a bilateral and multilateral basis, for promoting business contacts and business interaction between companies, organisations and associations from China and the 16 CEE countries.

Geographical indications are one of the major successes of European agriculture — over 3 300 EU names have been registered. A further 1 250 product names from outside the EU are also protected in the Union, mainly thanks to bilateral agreements such as the one with China. The market for EU geographical indication products is worth around EUR 54.3 billion. These products account for 15 % of the EU's food and drink exports.

The publication of a list of geographical indications launches the process of protecting the listed products from imitation and usurpation and is expected to lead to mutual trade benefits and better consumer awareness, as well as to increased demand for high-quality products in both countries.

The list of EU products that will be protected in China includes beer (Bayerisches Bier), cheeses (Feta, Queso Manchego, Gorgonzola), sparkling wine (Champagne) and vodka (Polska Wódka), while among the Chinese products seeking to obtain geographical indication status in the EU are apples (Yantai Ping Guo), jasmine tea (Hengxian Mo Li Hua Cha), rice (Panjin Da Mi) and mango (Baise Mang Guo). The publication of these lists is part of the standard procedure and marks the beginning of a period during which interested parties may submit their comments.

The Chinese market for food and drink products is one of the largest in the world and is growing every year thanks to a constantly expanding middle class with a taste for European foods and beverages, often as a result of international travel. China has its own rich tradition regarding geographical indications, many of which are still unknown to European consumers, but should become more accessible thanks to the agreement.

The European Commissioner for Agriculture Phil Hogan stated at the meeting: „Products with protected geographical indications in the EU are a real success. Their sales around the world continue to grow. Consumers across the globe trust our system for the classification of geographical indications. This means that they trust the origin and quality of

the products and are willing to pay a higher price for them and thus a premium for the producer. Close cooperation with our trading partners worldwide, such as China, helps to develop stronger trade links between like-minded partners and benefits both our farmers and rural economies and consumers on both sides of the agreement.“

Cooperation between the EU and China on geographical indications started more than 10 years ago and led to the protection of 10 products in both countries under their respective legislation. Building on this initial cooperation, in 2010 the EU and China launched negotiations on a bilateral agreement on cooperation and protection of geographical indications. The first stage of this process is the publication of two lists of 100 products from each side, which the other side will protect on its territory once the agreement enters into force.

Interested parties now have two months to submit their comments on the selected products and, if necessary, to notify the European and Chinese authorities of any potential problems.

List of European geographical indications

List of Chinese geographical indications