



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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Dear President,

I would like to thank the Italian Chamber of Deputies for its Opinion regarding the Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on agricultural product quality schemes {COM (2010) 733 final} and the Proposal to amend Regulation (EC) No 1234/2007 on marketing standards {COM (2010) 738 final}. Allow me to apologise for the extremely long delay in replying to this Opinion.

The Commission welcomes the support of the Italian Chamber of Deputies for these proposals regarding in particular the legal basis and the respect of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality.

The Commission shares your views on the importance of simplifying and streamlining the procedural requirements of EU quality schemes while ensuring that the specificities of classes of products and production are taken into account.

It is with this objective that a compromise text has been agreed by the EU co-legislators in the fourth Trilogue on quality schemes held on 20 June 2012. The final compromise text has been sent on 25 June 2012 by the Council to the European Parliament in view of its adoption in first reading during the second half of this year.

The Commission has recently launched a wide-ranging consultation process with a view to defining the contours of a more targeted and ambitious promotion strategy for the agriculture and food sector in Europe. Quality is at the forefront of the renewed efforts to provide better information to consumers.

The legislative proposals emphasise the multiple positive roles that producer groups can play in promoting and reinforcing the protection of protected designations of origin (PDOs) and protected geographical indications (PGIs). As regards the attribution of powers of management of volume of production, the Commission would like to stress the complexity of the issue in the light of its possible implications for compliance with EU competition rules.

Whilst not part of the Commission's original proposals, a set of rules on optional quality terms targeting mountain production and other productions with specific characteristics is now part of the compromise text. Reservation of an optional quality term "Mountain product" is established in the text and the Commission will have to define by delegated acts the methods of production and other criteria relevant for the application of the term, as well as to establish potential derogations.

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The compromise text only provides for the registration of Traditional Specialities Guaranteed scheme (TSG) with reservation. However, Member States will have the possibility to provide a list of names currently registered without reservation and that could fulfill the requirements of the new Regulation. A simplified procedure would then apply to register those names with reservation.

In addition a transitional period of 10 years is proposed during which these names could continue to be used.

You also raised the important issue of the differences in international protection of wine, spirits and agricultural products. Geographical indication-related issues will remain high on the Commission's agenda in the current round of negotiations at WTO level. The Commission will also continue to use bilateral agreements to ensure recognition and protection of EU geographical indications by its trade partners, both with regard to wine, spirits and agriculture products.

Concerning marketing standards, the Commission has based its proposal on the present legislation, adapting it to the new procedures of the Lisbon Treaty.

On the specific point of place of farming, the proposed formulation permits keeping existing Commission regulations in sectors such as olive oil and eggs whilst extending that indication to other sectors.

I hope that these clarifications address the concerns and questions raised in your Opinion.

I would like to thank the Italian Chamber of Deputies for its contribution and constructive approach to this issue and look forward to continuing our political dialogue.

Yours faithfully,

*Maroš Šefčovič
Vice-President*