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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Council

Subject: Common declaration of the group "Friends of the GIs" on the new review of the quality policy
- Information from the Spanish delegation

With a view to an 'Any other business' item at the Council ('Agriculture and Fisheries') on 21 March 2022, delegations will find in the Annex a note from the Spanish delegation on the abovementioned subject.

**COMMON DECLARATION OF THE GROUP “FRIENDS OF GIs” ON THE NEXT
REVIEW OF THE QUALITY POLICY**

The EU Member States Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Check Republic (as observer), Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania and Spain, after the Common Declaration issued by the Agriculture Ministers Council held on the 11th and 12th October 2021 on the review of the European agri-food quality policy (foods, wines and spirits) in order to strengthen the geographical indications (GIs) schemes, held a meeting on the 16th February 2022 and have agreed on the following points:

1. EVALUATION OF THE GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATIONS DOSSIERS

CONSIDERING that the great strength of the European system regarding the quality of the agri-food products, wines and spirits lies in the connection with the Common Agricultural Policy and consistency and cohesion derived from a single examination by the European Commission of the GIs dossiers.

CONSIDERING that is necessary to maintain the current procedure, with a first assessment by the Member State, followed by the assessment by the European Commission, through a technical agronomic examination and an evaluation from a legal perspective as an intellectual property right. These features guarantee the implementation of a harmonised procedure across the European Union.

WE AGREE that, within the new regulatory framework, the final evaluation of the GIs by European Commission must be maintained in the DG AGRI, by agri-food policy experts, and must have an agronomic-technical component and a juridical component, keeping statu quo and without outsourcing to other Agencies or Offices.

2. SUSTAINABILITY

CONSIDERING that sustainability within the framework of the quality policy must be oriented towards the promotion of GIs as an important sustainability tool from a social perspective (source of stable employment in specific rural areas with a depopulation risk), from an economic perspective (non-relocatable activities which provide economic support to rural areas generating added value) and from an environmental perspective (promoting biodiversity -local breeds and vegetal varieties- and production systems -extensive farming-).

CONSIDERING that the overlapping of the GIs legal framework and the future legal framework regarding agri-food sustainability must be avoided, with a wide-range definition of sustainability taking into account the specific considerations of GIs.

WE AGREE that the new regulatory framework should not impose a compulsory inclusion of sustainability requirements in the GIs specifications, but that this inclusion must have a voluntary nature. Training must be provided to GIs producers associations regarding producers' awareness and the benefits of including these objective of sustainability criteria in GIs specifications.

3. THE ROLE OF GIs PRODUCERS ASSOCIATIONS

CONSIDERING that the role of GIs producers associations is very important. When a producers association is well organised, the GI has a stronger position in the offline and online market, included the Domain Names System and also when the GI becomes an ingredient. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen GIs producers associations, as a voluntary option, in order to achieve those results.

WE AGREE that it is necessary to establish measures within the new regulatory framework in order to promote the creation of these producers associations and to build up support lines for marketing strategies, training, R&D activities and surveillance of the use of the protected name in the market, in order to advocate and reinforce the connected IP rights regarding GIs.

4. REGULATION ON CONTROL

CONSIDERING that, in the light of the experience gained, the current regulatory framework on official controls, Regulation (EU) 2017/625, is not well adapted to the specific features of the control system for GIs, and should incorporate more detailed provisions aiming at a more efficiency controls by all member states.

WE AGREE that the new regulatory framework for GIs should include a readjustment of the current regulation on official controls (Regulation 2017/625) in order to take into account the specific features of GIs, as has been the case for the regulation on organic production.
