

April 27, 2005

The Hon. Andy Mitchell
Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food
9th Floor, Sir John Carling Building
930 Carling Avenue
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0C5

Dear Minister:

RE: Canada's Position on Geographical Indications (GI's)

This is the Dairy Processors Association of Canada / Association des Transformateurs Laitiers du Canada response to your Department's recent consultations on the potential impact of GI extension and claw back on the Canadian cheese industry.

Our fourteen members operate in every region of the country and purchase, process and market more than 90 percent of all milk produced in Canada. These companies are the country's major cheese processors producing and selling their products including cheddar, mozzarella, parmesan and a comprehensive list of speciality cheeses that total sales approaching \$3 billion annually.

DPAC/ATLC members are very concerned with the European Union's (EU) efforts to extend to foods - particularly cheeses - the geographical indication (GI) protection that was established exclusively for wines and spirits in the Trade-related aspects of intellectual property rights (TRIPS) Agreement. Our members are adamant that Canada maintain it's current position that the GI protection provided for all goods by the current TRIPS Agreement is effective and adequate and that position is non-negotiable.

Canada's cheese industry has developed over many generations using the same methods as common/generic named cheeses made in Europe and elsewhere. Our cheese makers with strict adherence to high quality have developed products that gained the recognition and loyalty of consumers. Canadians appreciate and demand the texture, taste and other differences that distinguish these cheese varieties made by many different suppliers both domestic and foreign. Indeed, many of these generic cheese names have international standards developed at the CODEX. There is no legitimate reason to alter this situation and it would lead to substantial consumer confusion and inestimable costs to our dairy industry.

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It is impossible to determine or assess the costs to our industry or consumers if Canada and other countries conceded to any of the EU's proposals. The impact would be catastrophic. We would be forced to develop new and meaningless names for our traditional cheese products. It would result in major labelling, packaging and new and long-term promotion and consumer education programs and result in market chaos and consumer confusion for many years.

Canada must join the U.S.A., New Zealand, Australia, Argentina and many other countries with its opposition. Our members insist, along with dairy producers and other major stakeholders, that Canada firmly reject any effort by the EU to extend GI protection to foods including cheese names in these current WTO Doha negotiations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Don Jarvis", written over a horizontal line.

Don Jarvis
President and CEO

- c.c. The Honourable James S. Peterson, Minister for International Trade Canada
Steve Verheul, Chief Agriculture Negotiator, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada
Douglas George, International Trade Canada
Céline Duguay, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada
Jean-François Lefier, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada
Carole Gendron, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada
Richard Doyle, Dairy Farmers of Canada
Donald Kubesh, Stikeman and Elliott
Pierre Nadeau, Conseil de l'industrie laitière
Tom Kane, Ontario Dairy Council