EU/Iceland agreement: protection of geographical indications for agricultural products and foodstuffs

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PURPOSE: to conclude an agreement between the European Union and Iceland on the protection of geographical indications for agricultural products and foodstuffs.

PROPOSED ACT: Council Decision.

ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT: Council may adopt the act only if Parliament has given its consent to the act.

BACKGROUND: Article 19 of the European Economic Area Agreement (EEA Agreement) contains provisions on trade in agricultural products. The 2007 EU-Iceland bilateral Agreement on trade preferences includes, among others, a commitment by the Parties to promote trade in products with geographical indications (GIs).

The EU-Iceland GIs negotiations were conducted from 4 July 2012 to 17 September 2015. The negotiations were carried out in conjunction with the EU-Iceland negotiations on further liberalisation of trade in agricultural and processed agricultural products.

The conclusion of the GIs Agreement with Iceland fits into the overall EU strategy of promoting the production and the consumption of EU products with GIs.

CONTENT: the Commission proposed that the Council adopt a decision, approving on behalf of the European Union, **the Agreement between the European Union and Iceland on the protection of geographical indications for agricultural products and foodstuffs.**

Under this Agreement, **1 150 EU foodstuff GIs** will obtain a high level of direct protection in Iceland.

The GIs will be protected against:

- any direct or indirect commercial use;
- any misuse, imitation or evocation of the product;
- any other false or misleading indication as to the provenance, origin, nature or essential qualities of the product;
- any other practice liable to mislead the consumer as to the true origin of the product.

Iceland has not yet registered any protected GI names.

The Agreement provides, however, a mechanism for **updating the GIs list** and for including new GI names at a later stage through a Joint Committee process

The EEA Agreement already provides for the mutual recognition and protection of geographical indications for wines, aromatised wine products and spirit drinks. Therefore **the scope of this Agreement covers only agricultural products and foodstuffs other than wines, aromatised wine products and spirit drinks**.

The GIs Agreement will enter into force on the first day of the month following the date on which the Parties have notified each other that their respective internal adoption procedures have been completed.