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Italy expands powers for food protection consortia under a new decree

The measure gives DOP and IGP producer groups broader authority over promotion, enforcement, sustainability, tourism and supply planning.

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Italy’s Agriculture Ministry has adopted a new decree that expands the powers of protection consortia for DOP and IGP products, a move that industry groups say will strengthen the country’s system of geographical indications and give producer organizations a larger role in promotion, oversight, sustainability and food tourism.

The measure was adopted by the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forests, known as Masaf, in implementation of European Union Regulation 2024/1143. It updates the legal framework for the consortia that represent and protect certified agricultural and food products with protected designation of origin, or DOP, and protected geographical indication, or IGP, status.

Under the new rules, the consortia gain broader responsibilities in managing denominations, promoting products in Italy and abroad, protecting reputation, monitoring markets, overseeing online misuse and handling issues tied to trademarks and intellectual property. The decree also gives them a more formal role in sustainability initiatives, territorial development and tourism linked to geographical indication products.

The change matters because Italy’s DOP and IGP system is one of the largest in Europe and is central to the country’s food economy, from cheeses and cured meats to olive oil, balsamic vinegar and other regional specialties. The consortia already play a key role in defending names tied to specific places and production methods. The new decree gives them wider tools at a time when producers face pressure from international competition, digital counterfeiting, changing consumer demand and the need to adapt to environmental goals.

Origin Italia, the association that represents Italian protection consortia, welcomed the decree on Tuesday. Cesare Baldrighi, the group’s president, said the measure strengthens the strategic role of organized representation for geographical indications and confirms that consortia are becoming more essential to Italian food quality policy.

According to the text described by Origin Italia, one important change is a more flexible system for recognizing consortia. That could make it easier for smaller or more complex denominations to create representative bodies that fit market needs. The decree also opens the door to creating a single consortium for several geographical indications,

including products from different supply chains. The aim is to encourage aggregation among producers and operators while reducing long-standing fragmentation.

That provision could be especially relevant for smaller denominations that may lack the scale or resources to maintain separate structures for promotion, legal defense and market monitoring. At the same time, the framework is meant to preserve each denomination’s decision-making autonomy within any shared consortium model.

The decree also updates governance rules inside the consortia. It revises statutes, representation criteria and principles tied to transparency, balance and participation. In practice, that means a push toward governance structures that better reflect the complexity of modern supply chains and support shared strategic decisions among producers and processors.

Another major element is the full incorporation of new functions assigned by EU law to recognized producer groups. In this area, Italian protection consortia are confirmed as central actors not only in promotion and surveillance but also in legal protection of denominations and broader management of certified names. Their powers are reinforced in areas such as intellectual property protection, action against illicit uses of protected names, market monitoring and online enforcement.

The decree also gives consortia a decisive role in managing how protected names are used in compound, processed or transformed products. That includes authorizations and maintaining lists of operators allowed to use those denominations in such products. This is a sensitive issue for many Italian food sectors because producers have long argued that protected names can be diluted or misused when they appear as ingredients or references on processed foods without clear rules.

Tourism is another area where the ministry has widened their mandate. The decree allows consortia to promote initiatives and adopt guidelines for developing gastronomic tourism linked to DOP and IGP products. That reflects a broader trend in Italy’s food policy, where local specialties are increasingly tied not only to exports and retail sales but also to travel experiences built around production areas, tasting routes and rural economies.

Sustainability has also been written into the new framework. While the source text does not detail specific environmental obligations or metrics, it says consortia will now have explicit competence in this field. That suggests they may take on a stronger coordinating role as producers respond to regulatory pressure and consumer expectations around environmental performance.

One of the most closely watched parts of the decree concerns supply regulation. The new rules recognize a role for consortia in proposing temporary measures aimed at improving production planning, market balance, product valorization and transparency in supply systems. The stated goal is to ensure fairer enhancement of primary production and reinforce the link between product, territory and producing communities.

That power is likely to draw attention because supply management has long been a delicate issue in European agricultural policy. The decree says any such measures must respect EU principles of proportionality, non-discrimination and free competition. Even so, giving consortia a clearer path to propose temporary interventions could affect how some sectors respond to oversupply risks or price pressure.

For Italy’s food industry, the decree signals that geographical indications are being treated not only as labels of origin but as economic systems that require stronger collective management. By broadening what protection consortia can do, Rome is aligning national rules with the latest EU framework while giving producer groups more authority over how protected names are defended, promoted and developed across domestic markets, exports and tourism.