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Prosecco's Geographical Indication Protection Strengthened in China

A Landmark Victory for Italian Wine Producers

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In a landmark decision that underscores the global significance of geographical indications (GIs) in the wine industry, the Consortium for the Protection of Prosecco DOC has triumphed in a legal battle against Australian Wine and Grape Inc. (Agwi), reinforcing the Prosecco brand's protection in the Chinese market. This victory not only solidifies the legal standing of the Prosecco denomination in one of the world's largest consumer markets but also marks a crucial step in the ongoing efforts to safeguard the integrity and distinctiveness of regional wine varieties on the international stage.

The issue centered around the registration of the Prosecco trademark in China, represented by the Chinese characters "普罗塞克" (Pu Luo Sai Ke). The Consortium's relentless efforts over the

years have yielded substantial protections for the Prosecco denomination in China. These efforts include both the registration of the "Prosecco" trademark and the benefits derived from the Cooperation and Protection of Geographical Indications Agreement between the European Union and the Government of the People's Republic of China. The addition of the Chinese character branding, which Agwi challenged, represents a strategic move in reinforcing the Prosecco brand's identity in the Far East.

Agwi's challenge to this branding stemmed from its interest in exporting Australian wines labeled as "prosecco" to the Chinese market. The Australian association filed an application for annulment, arguing that "Prosecco" refers to a grape variety rather than a wine protected as a GI. The Beijing High Court (BHC), however, rejected Agwi's appeal after two levels of judgment, affirming that the Prosecco brand, even in its Chinese transliteration, is indeed a GI and is exclusive to the Italian wine.

Stefano Zanette, President of the Consortium for the Protection of Prosecco DOC, expressed satisfaction with the court's decision, noting China's recognition of Prosecco as an indisputable denomination of origin. This recognition, Zanette emphasized, is a testament to the unique characteristics of the Prosecco-producing territories and the dedication of the entire DOC supply chain. The protection of the Prosecco name in China not only benefits Italian producers but also serves to maintain the authenticity and quality standards that consumers associate with this renowned sparkling wine.

This legal victory in China is significant not only for Prosecco producers but also for the broader context of geographical indications in the global wine market. It demonstrates the effectiveness of legal frameworks in protecting the unique heritage and quality of regional wines, ensuring that consumers around the world can enjoy authentic products with a clear and protected identity.