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Italy Secures Protection for 58 Food Products in Mercosur Deal as Geneva Act Expands GI Safeguards

New international framework extends Italian and European Geographical Indications, opening export opportunities amid global market uncertainty

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On January 7, 2026, Italy marked a significant step in the protection of Geographical Indications (GIs), both for its own products and those from across Europe. The Italian Parliament finalized the ratification of the Geneva Act, a key update to the Lisbon Agreement on Appellations of Origin and Geographical Indications. This move comes after a decade-long wait and extends protections previously reserved for Protected Designations of Origin (PDOs) to include Protected Geographical Indications (PGIs). The Geneva Act, adopted in May 2015 by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), now has 44 contracting parties. It modernizes the international system for GI protection, broadening its scope to cover not only comparable products but also services and all forms of misuse, including imitation and usurpation.

Origin Italia, the main association representing Italian GIs and led by Cesare Baldrighi, highlighted that this ratification introduces greater flexibility in application procedures and expands the geographical reach of protection. For the first time, intergovernmental organizations like the European Union can join the system directly. Individual EU countries that are already part of the Lisbon Agreement, such as Italy, will be able to maintain prior protections for their PDOs under this new framework.

On the same day, Italy’s Minister of Agriculture, Francesco Lollobrigida, announced support for the European Union’s free trade agreement with Mercosur countries—Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay, and Uruguay—during a meeting of the EU Agriculture and Fisheries Council (Agrifish). The agricultural chapter of this agreement has been one of its most contentious points. European producers have long demanded strong safeguards and reciprocal standards as conditions for opening markets to South American goods. The political agreement on EU-Mercosur was reached at the end of 2024 but was put on hold last December due to concerns from several member states about enforcement and reciprocity.

With Italy’s backing, negotiations are now moving toward completion. The agreement will secure recognition and protection for 58 Italian GIs in Mercosur countries—26 of which are food products—alongside a total of 347 European GIs. This is seen as an important commercial opportunity at a time when traditional markets face uncertainty. Italian agri-food products will gain new avenues for export and enhanced international recognition.

Origin Italia emphasized its role in advocating for these changes, stressing the need for both multilateral and bilateral tools to support exports and ensure effective protection for PDOs and PGIs. The organization also pointed out ongoing challenges from outside Europe, particularly from U.S. policies that have sometimes sought to weaken GI protections.

Cesare Baldrighi praised both the Italian government and Parliament for their commitment to these measures. He described them as crucial steps in strengthening GI protections and sending a clear message against protectionist policies that could undermine established systems. According to Baldrighi, these developments demonstrate Italy’s understanding of the potential benefits for its high-quality food sector and reinforce its leadership in promoting GI values worldwide.