

Italian producers showcase importance of IP protections to visiting SE Asia officials

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The directors-general and other senior representatives from several South-East Asian intellectual property (IP) offices met with local producers in northern Italy over the weekend to gain a better understanding of how geographical indications (GI) contribute to economic development. Producers of Parmigiano Reggiano cheese, Balsamic Vinegar of Modena, Garda Extra Virgin Olive Oil and Apples of Val di Non guided the delegates through the unique sites, production processes and labelling that make their products immediately recognisable in international markets.

GI protection is considered a particularly useful tool for economic growth and sustainable development in regional areas. It helps consumers identify the distinct local qualities of products, provides protection against counterfeits, and complies with environmentally-sound practices. Likewise, GIs play an important role in trade and rural development in South-East Asia by fostering new markets for traditional products.

Hosted by the EU-funded IP Key South-East Asia (IP Key SEA) programme, the visiting delegates, accompanied by the European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO) and an EU Commission representative, gained valuable insights on EU protection regimes for GIs following presentations from several producers on their benefits, such as quality controls and marketing synergies.

Director General of the Intellectual Property Office of the Philippines, Josephine Rima-Santiago commented, "The producers we met showed the importance of GI protection to the success of local, high-quality products in export markets. They were very informative about the best practices in a GI regime that may be useful to local producers in the Philippines."

Director General of the Directorate General of Intellectual Property of Indonesia, Dr. Freddy Harris noted, "Effective GI protection systems have helped producers both in Europe and Indonesia by guaranteeing the quality of their products and building a consumer base for their unique products."

The ASEAN GI Database contains over 150 domestic GIs registered in the region since 2001, including Kampot Pepper (Cambodia), Gayo Arabica Coffee (Indonesia), Doi Tung Coffee (Thailand), and Phu Quoc fish sauce (Viet Nam). Along with three others from Thailand, these examples are also registered in the EU and benefit from a high level of protection in EU markets as a result. The number of ASEAN GIs protected in the EU is expected to increase substantially due to specific GI provisions in recent and proposed free trade agreements.

ABOUT IP KEY SOUTH-EAST ASIA:

The GI study visit in Italy is one of a range of activities being delivered by [IP Key South-East Asia](#) (IP Key SEA), a four-year, EUR 7 million programme funded by the European Union and implemented by the EUIPO aimed at supporting IP rights protection and enforcement across South-East Asia, with a view to creating the



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appropriate legal and economic environment conducive to trade and investment in the region. Through enhancing IP frameworks and good practice, IP Key SEA aims to ensure a level playing field for both local enterprises and EU stakeholders. IP Key SEA is one of three EU-funded programmes dedicated to IP that are being implemented by the EUIPO, together with [IP Key China](#) and [IP Key Latin America](#).

IP Key SEA operates concurrently with another EU-funded project also implemented by the EUIPO, [ARISE+ IPR](#), which shares the same thematic and geographical scope. Each programme has a distinct focus and approach, with ARISE+ IPR targeting economic integration within ASEAN and IP Key SEA focusing on fostering convergence in the area of IP between individual South-East Asian nations and the EU, particularly with a view to supporting bilateral trade agreements with comprehensive chapters on intellectual property rights, whether concluded or under negotiation, as well as IP dialogues. The programmes are complementary and have the same ultimate objective: to improve the intellectual property environment in the region for the benefit of all stakeholders operating with and within the region.

ABOUT THE EUIPO:

The European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO) is an agency of the EU, based in Alicante, Spain. It manages the registration of the European Union trade mark (EUTM) and the Registered Community Design (RCD), both of which provide protection in all 28 EU member-states, as well as carrying out cooperation activities with the national and regional intellectual property offices of the EU. Under the goals of its Strategic Plan 2020, the EUIPO, in cooperation with national and regional EU IP offices, aims to promote global cooperation on IP between EU partners, third countries and multilateral organisations.

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