What's in a name?

On April 1, a registry to protect the geographical uniqueness of foods and beverages will kick in. The names of products in the registry will be protected and cannot be used to label similar goods elsewhere. The European Union has drawn up more than 100 names for which it intends to apply for protection in Singapore. The Straits Times checked out the retail prices of some of these items imported from places that bore their names and similar products from elsewhere.

New registry could protect names like parmesan

Move will bar import and sale of products with EU-origin names but are made elsewhere

Ng Soon Seow and Soon Hooi Business Correspondents

The names of geographically assigned and approves, which are identified by the word “PDO” (protected designation of origin) or “PGI” (protected geographical indication), carry with them a promise of quality: that the goods were made in a specific place, following a distinctive process. These products include champagne from France and Parmigiano-Reggiano from Italy.

On April 1, Europe barred the import and sale of products that use these names but are made elsewhere.

Initially, Singapore will likely allow the import and sale of products that use these names but are made elsewhere.

The move will be important as Singapore’s firms will likely sell these products to local companies, which will resell the products to consumers.

The names of geographical indications, which are known as PGI and PDO in Europe, are intended to protect the unique features of a product, such as a name having become synonymous with a geographical area.

In order to be protected under PGI or PDO, a product must be made in a particular region, following a specific method of production. The term “Parma ham” refers to products that meet certain standards for manufacture.

In Singapore, the protection of geographical indications will take place under the EU-Singapore Free Trade Agreement, which came into force last month. The agreement includes provisions to protect certain products.

What does the GI registry mean for S’pore?

Singapore’s Registry of Geographical Indications (SGI) will start operating on April 1, which is mandated by law.

The president of the European Commission, Ms Ursula von der Leyen, said, “GI systems foster rural intellectual property rights by promoting the name of products that truly reveal traditions, production methods and knowhow.”

GI protection aims to safeguard the production and cultural heritage of small and medium enterprises, which are known as GIs.

Who benefits from protection?

GI protection also helps guard against non-authentic products being sold in the market. It can result in legal action.

The move will bar the import and sale of products that use these names but are made elsewhere.

What is a GI?

GI refers to any name of a product that is known to have a geographical connection, which names are protected.

A GI could result in a legal action as well. It is up to the applicant whether the application can be granted.

The listing will be published on Ipos’ website.

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What’s in a name?

Anyone can apply for their item to be protected. But others may oppose the listing too, leading to a legal process that may take nearly a year.

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