



**Indicate the geographical origin of products:  
good or bad idea?**

The European Parliament adopted a [resolution](#) suggesting a mandatory indication of the geographical origin of food products on their labels.

Such an approach is unfortunately inconsistent for certain types of products ... Indeed, when a product is made from Chinese grain, is processed in France and packaged in Germany, the indication of origin loses its meaning.

Refer to the origin of a product can only be meaningful in two situations:

- When the product is not processed (like fruit and vegetables, for example);
- When the quality of a product is associated with a specific geographic area.

In both cases, some mechanisms already exist. First, there is a labeling requirement for certain products such as fruits, vegetables and wine. Second, the signs of quality, both national and EC (AOC, Protected Designation of Origin, Protected Geographical Indication ...) reflect, in essence, a particular link with the origin of the product ; what the experts called the "*link to the land*".

Fortunately, the Parliament did not fall into this trap and has limited this labeling to a limited number of products (lightly or not processed). It simply extends the list of products already covered by this obligation by adding to fruit and vegetables, wine, eggs, fish and honey, foodstuffs like poultry, dairy products or processed products containing a single ingredient.

Such labeling may therefore be meaningful. This resolution, however, is not free of any inconvenience. It can be problematic for two reasons.

Firstly, although intended to clarify and simplify the labeling of foodstuffs, it encourages the proliferation of information contained on these labels. The Parliament proposed to make mandatory nutrition labeling but also to add a reference to the geographical origin of the product. It finally suggests the creation of a new logo "EU Quality" which, in reality, will be more the result of compliance with the regulations in force than a true reflection of the superior quality of products.

How a *average consumer* since that is the criterion adopted by the Court of Justice of the European Union may fully understand the labeling of a product that pictures the logo "EU Quality ", the words" Produced in France", the logo" Protected Geographical Indication "and the words" British Poultry"?

Then, these labels, that differentiate food products according to their country of production, seem to be an obstacle to the principle of non-discrimination as well as a barrier to the free movement of goods. Indeed, it seems likely that, for reasons of trust in particular, nationals of a country would prefer products from their own country rather than from another. This discrimination could be risky in front of the Court.

In addition, the name of a country or a specific quality of products from the European Union is also likely to create difficulties in front of the WTO. The future of this resolution seems therefore uncertain.

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