Simple indications of source

Simple designations which refer to origin (e.g. Swiss furniture or strawberries from Seeland) are used by several manufacturers in a particular region and are therefore not the “property” of an individual. In general, a producer or service provider does not require authorisation to use an indication of source, provided that they can prove that the goods or services in question actually come from the geographical area in question.

If companies, for example, want to advertise their products as being of Swiss origin, they just need to fulfil the legally defined criteria for determining origin. Indications of source may not be deceptive. This means that, for example, a Swiss importer of Italian apples may not indicate that the apples come from Switzerland. The clear rules on the use of Swiss indications of source help to prevent misuse and maintain the long-term value of the indications.

Qualified indications of source

In addition to simple indications of source such as ‘Swiss furniture’, there are specific qualified designations such as Tête de Moine or St. Galler Kalbsbratwurst. These are specially protected indications of source that are entered in a register and the products to which they refer must meet the requirements of the product specification. The designations registered as protected geographical indications (PGIs) or protected designations of origin (PDOs) may be used by any manufacturer who fulfils the conditions defined in the product specification. For Swiss PDOs and PGIs, this is assessed by a certification body.

Registering a protected geographical indication (PGI) or a protected designation of origin (PDO) gives the producer greater legal certainty and contributes to their economic survival. PGIs and PDOs may also be registered as geographical marks. This simplifies enforcing protection of the designation in Switzerland and abroad.

DOCUMENTS & LINKS