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PRESS RELEASE

The European Wine Companies Committee (CEEV) calls Member States to ensure that effective functioning of the internal market remains a key principle of the EU Quality Policy for agricultural products.

Brussels, 19 June 2009 – With a view to the debate on the *Communication from the Commission on Agricultural Product Quality Policy* at the next Council of Ministers of Agriculture (22 & 23 June 2009), the European Wine Companies Committee (CEEV), representing the producers, marketers and exporters of the vast majority of EU quality wines, is asking the member States and the European Commission to consider the following fundamental priority principles for any future policy development in this area when it comes to wine products and sector:

- Ensuring that the proper effective functioning of the internal market be underlined as a key essential principle that must inspire any further development in the quality policy area;
- Respecting the sector and products specificities;
- Improving the international protection of GIs of wines and spirits at multilateral and bilateral level through in particular the creation of the multilateral register foreseen in the TRIPs agreement;
- Ensuring a proper definition of the relationship between the various intellectual property rights (trademarks, GIs, etc).

“We are strongly committed to the concept of Geographical Indication and to the strengthening of its protection at international level. At the same time, the primary driver for success or failure in delivering quality lies in the hands of the companies’ brands / trademarks, as they assume individually both the legal responsibility of fulfilling the statutory requirements in force, and the economic risk of failure in meeting the broader consumer expectations. Actually, “Quality” is ultimately a matter of individual and/or collective efforts by producers to meet consumer expectations and to gain their appreciation. So the two concepts, trademarks and GIs, are not in conflict, but instead economic operators must be able to use them complementarily and reinforcing each other to better meet their consumer’s expectations – said José Ramon Fernández, Secretary General of CEEV.

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The Comité Européen des Entreprises Vins (CEEV – “Comité Vins”, www.ceev.be) represents the wine industry and trade in the European Union: still wines, aromatised wines, sparkling wines, liqueur wines and other products of the vine. It brings together 24 national organisations. With over 7,000 companies, mainly SMEs, and more than 200,000 direct jobs in the EU, its members produce and market the vast majority of European wines and account for over 90% of European wine exports. With some 6 billion Euros of exports every year, the wine sector makes a contribution of 3 billion Euros to the EU trade balance.