



CHINA RECOGNIZES AND PROTECTS THE GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATION CHAMPAGNE

Following several years of negotiations between the Chinese authorities and Comité Champagne (CIVC), Champagne has officially been recognized as a protected geographical indication in China. The Champenois have welcomed the news, which will provide Champagne wines with the optimal level of protection against misuse of the appellation as well as acknowledgement that origins matter.

Monsieur Jean-Luc Barbier, Managing Director of Comité Champagne praised *'the excellent relations between China and France concerning geographical indications'*.

A geographical indication is a specific intellectual property right that designates a product from a specific region and whose characteristics result in both the natural conditions of its origin and the expertise of local producers. Geographical indications are frequent across the globe, particularly in China where they have met notable success. Champagne is among the oldest, arguably the most famous and prestigious one.

It is in the Champagne vineyards, a region located 150 kilometres east of Paris (France), that Champagne houses and growers have been producing, for more than three centuries and under stringent regulations, an exceptional sparkling wine. With 309 million bottles shipped to 180 countries in 2012, Champagne wines are enjoyed by a growing number of consumers worldwide.

Often copied, never equalled, its commercial success and fame attract many imitators and copycats. The Comité Champagne, which represents the Champagne growers and houses, relentlessly endeavours to protect the name Champagne and ensures that only wines that benefit from the geographical indication are called Champagne.

'China's decision to register Champagne as a geographical indication is a major achievement for the champenois', comments Monsieur Charles Goemaere, Head of Comité Champagne's legal department. *'It reaffirms that 'Champagne only comes from Champagne' in what is fast becoming one of Champagne's most promising markets while sending a strong message that origin matters'*.

'This registration will enable the competent authorities to effectively act against the misuse which is not frequent but needs to be quickly detected and stopped', adds Ms. Wang Wei, Director of the Beijing-based Champagne Bureau in China.

China is currently the fastest-growing market for Champagne. In 2012 shipments exceeded 2 million bottles, an increase of 51.8% over 2011. China is now the fifth largest Champagne market outside the European Union and this growth is expected to continue.

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