



American Origin Products Association

Recognizing and protecting origin products of the United States

President: Colehour Bondera

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<http://www.aop-us.org>

The Honorable Earl Blumenauer
The Honorable Lee Zeldin
US House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

April 11, 2018

RE: Support for House Resolution 766: Recognizing the Contributions of American Viticultural Areas and Winegrowing Regions.

Dear Rep. Blumenauer and Zeldin,

On behalf of the American Origin Products Association, we appreciate your support for geographically distinctive place names, and your introduction of House Resolution 766. Your willingness to recognize the importance of place is an important step in protecting, promoting and preserving America's agricultural heritage and our rural economy.

The American Origin Products Association <http://www.aop-us.org> applauds your support for these goals, and looks forward to working with you to pass this landmark legislative initiative. As you may know, thousands of geographically distinctive agricultural products across the United States bring good jobs and sustainable economic development to America's rural economy, enhance America's trade relationships and build strong consumer loyalty and satisfaction.

Regionally identified foods, such as Idaho Potatoes, Napa Valley Wines and Kona Coffee, rank among the American agricultural products with the highest value-added. American Origin Products enjoy the highest reputation for tradition and quality, which in turn draws a strong and stable consumer demand.

These place-based products drive regional rural development and local economies, as well as enjoy a competitive advantage in domestic and foreign markets. As such, they are a frequent target for fraud and counterfeiting, against which small and medium-sized farmers lack the resources to fight.

To help combat this, many countries implement and enforce certification frameworks and strong intellectual property protections for such products with an easily recognizable seal that indicates certified authenticity, quality and traceability. The US has no such system for its Origin Products. Farmers wanting to protect their goods are expected to rely on trademarks, for which

the cost of registering, monitoring, and maintaining is cost-prohibitive to all but the biggest and wealthiest.

The AOPA believes that small and medium-sized American farmers and agricultural artisans of Origin Products should be supported and provided with access to certification and protection. To this end, the American Origin Products Association is a nationwide network of producers working to establish an affordable and efficient means of distinguishing and protecting our members' Origin Products - groups with products as varied as New Mexico Chiles Nativos, Vermont Maple Sugar and Napa Valley wine.

We look forward to working with you and your co-sponsors to achieve these goals. Please consider the American Origin Products Association as a resource in your efforts, and keep us informed of how we can support your progress.

Sincerely,

Colehour Bondera
President