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Press Release

.../for immediate release

EU Ambassador welcomes first applications for protecting SA names for SA food products in EU

The European Union's ambassador to South Africa, Roeland van de Geer, this week received from the Minister of Trade and Industry, Dr Rob Davies, a first request for the protection of South African agricultural food product names as geographical indications (or "GIs") in the EU. The applications concern the names "Rooibos" (infusion), "Honeybush" (infusion) and "Karoo" (lamb meat).

Amb Van De Geer said: "I am delighted that South Africa has committed itself to a process of seeking protection for product names that it claims as its own and welcome having received these first requests for geographical indications in food products. The development of a GI system for South African farmers will reinforce the uniqueness and quality of South African products". He added: "South African wine makers have used the GI system for many years. They have found it an effective way to protect famous names and identities like Paarl and Stellenbosch."

The requests will be forwarded to the European Commission in Brussels. They will be examined for conformity with EU rules on GI protection and if they meet the requirements, the GIs will be protected via the Economic Partnership Agreement currently under negotiation between seven states in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the EU.

Amb Van De Geer concluded: "We continue to work within the EPA negotiations towards a jointly beneficial protection regime."

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Background

The EU has developed a GI scheme covering diverse food names, which encourages quality agricultural production, protects names from misuse and imitation and helps consumers with information on products' specific characteristics. Over 70 non-EU products are currently protected as GIs in the EU. More information on the European GI system is available at http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/quality/schemes/index_en.htm.

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