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EXCHANGE OF LETTERS BETWEEN THE COMMUNITY AND THE UNITED STATES ON WINE

Consultations have been taking place since 1976 on the technical and legal problems arising between the United States Government and the Commission with regard to wine. The imbalance in trade formed the background to these discussions (for example, in 1981/82 the United States imported 4 020 975 hl from the Community and exported 75 303 hl to the Community). One of the results of the consultations is the recent signing of an exchange of letters between the United States Government and the Commission. The letters were first examined in detail by the Member States, which indicated their agreement in accordance with the customary Community procedures.

The subjects dealt with in this exchange of letters may be summarized as follows : under the rules for the common organization of the wine market, only wines which have been subject to oenological practices allowed by Community legislation may be used for direct human consumption in the Community. The rules apply both to wines produced in the Community and to imported wines. A comparison of practices allowed in the United States and the practices provided for under Community rules revealed that some exceptions to Community rules had to be allowed in respect of imports of certain US wines which have been the subject of oenological practices which are not authorized in the Community. The letter expresses the Community's willingness to make the necessary adjustments.

The United States has not hitherto been prepared to follow the Community rules which require an accompanying document identifying the wine and certifying that none of the oenological practices prohibited in the Community has been used. Now that the two sides have reached an understanding on permissible oenological practices, the rules concerning the accompanying document can be revised to the satisfaction of the United States and the Community.

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Mutual recognition of geographical names used in the designation of wines is crucial to the protection of such designations in international trade. In the exchange of letters the United States indicates that it is now prepared to help prevent the downgrading of geographical designations into generic names.

The Community and the United States also declare that they have decided to enter into technical discussions with a view to harmonizing the rules on the labelling of wines and will set up a system of collaboration to facilitate the detection of infringements of Community and US rules on wine.
