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Contact: Ella Krucoff
(202) 862-9540

E.C. EASES WINE TRADE WITH THE U.S.

The European Community has acted to increase the access of American wine to Community markets.

The E.C. Council of Ministers last week adopted legislation that implements a U.S.-E.C. agreement on wine-making practices. The Council regulation, which takes effect today, allows U.S. wines that have been treated with certain substances to be imported into the Community. The provisions were outlined in an exchange of letters between the U.S. and the Community in July 1983.

In the exchange of letters, the Community said it would declare some U.S. wine-making practices equivalent to those authorized under Community regulations. It also agreed to allow some U.S. wines produced under unauthorized methods to enter the Community -- some permanently, others until 1988. At the same time, the United States agreed to discontinue some wine-making practices that are not permitted under Community regulations. Those regulations are designed to protect public health and prevent fraud.

The exchange of letters resulted from U.S.-E.C. consultations that began in 1976 on wine-making practices. The two parties also agreed to continue discussions aimed at harmonizing rules on labeling wine and to work jointly to detect infringements of E.C. and U.S. wine-making rules. They backed cooperative scientific investigations into certain methods of treating wine.

In addition, the United States indicated it would help prevent European geographical names from being used as generic names to designate wine.

The talks were held against the background of an imbalance in U.S.-E.C. wine trade. In 1983, for example, the Community exported to the United States 6.2 million hectoliters of wine valued at \$654 million. That year, it imported 60,000 hectoliters of wine valued at \$8 million from the United States. In overall agriculture trade, however, the U.S. had a trade surplus with the E.C. of about \$5 billion in 1983.