



NOVEMBER 2025

THE “MEAT SOUNDING” WHEN FOOD COMMUNICATION BECOMES ESSENTIAL AND HOW TO AVOID TRADEMARK REJECTION

The plant-based food market has seen significant growth recently. From "veggie burgers" to "tofu sausages," a growing number of consumers are opting for these products for ethical, health, and environmental reasons.

Various market research studies have found that retail sales of five plant-based food categories (meat, milk, cheese, yogurt, and cream alternatives) in supermarkets and discount stores in Italy reached €639 million in 2024, an increase of 16.4% compared to 2022 and 7.6% compared to 2023.

The Italian market for plant-based foods therefore appears to be booming, and the **plant-based consumer base** seems to have expanded well beyond the confines of

vegetarians and vegans. In this niche, private label products are gaining significant ground: between 2022 and 2024, sales grew by 17.4%, reaching more than half the market by 2024.

Thus, the so-called **practice of “meat sounding” has taken hold**, that is, the use of terms typical of meat (such as "sausage", "burger", "steak") to label plant-based, vegan or synthetic alternatives to it, therefore, for products that do not contain meat but derive from soy, legumes, cereals or other plant-based sources.

Opponents of this practice argue that the use of such terms is aimed at exploiting product recognition and increasing sales, while simultaneously reducing the market share held by the traditional sector.

At the same time, it is argued that incorrect nutritional information is also provided: consumers may believe that plant-based chicken is nutritionally equivalent to real chicken.

Indeed, one of the most thorny aspects of this practice is linked to **doubts about the transparency of communication and consumers' right to information.**

In addition to meat companies, farmers themselves have lobbied national governments and the European Union to ensure the protection of typical meat names. They argue that terms like “steak”, “wing”, or “bacon” should be reserved exclusively for animal products, to protect tradition and ensure clear information for consumers.

Given the controversial nature of this practice and the pressure it has received, the European institutions have decided to intervene to protect consumers from potential misleading practices.

On **July 16, 2025**, the European Commission presented a proposal to amend Regulation (EU) 1308/2013 on the common organization of the markets. Among the various proposed provisions, it is proposed **to reserve the use of 29 terms, including "steak," "bacon," "chicken," "rib," "wing," or "sausage," to describe foods made from meat or derived exclusively from meat.**

The report accompanying the proposal indicates that the ban has two main objectives. The first one is political in nature and reflects the European Commission's desire to **support the EU livestock sector**, considered a key component of EU agriculture, characterized by high standards that are often not adequately compensated on the market. The second objective concerns **consumer protection**: the Commission believes that meat-related terms have significant cultural and historical value and protecting them ensures greater transparency and clarity for product buyers.

In this scenario, it is advisable to pay particular attention to the choice of a **trademark.**

In fact, it is not possible to register trademarks that could mislead the consumer regarding the food nature of the product to which they refer.

For example, the trademark “**Veggiemett**”, registered in the European Union for “*meat, fish, poultry and game, in particular sausage and ham products; meat extracts*”, was refused by the EUIPO (European Union Intellectual Property Office) because “*for the German-speaking public, ‘Veggie’ is understood as an indication of purely vegetable ingredients, or of purely vegetable origin, and ‘mett’ is understood as a meat product consisting specifically of mince. The overall message of the sign is meat-free variants of the food product (...). A German-speaking consumer could erroneously assume that it involves a vegetarian foodstuff*”.

The trademark “**JUST EGG**” for “*plant-based egg substitute; liquid egg substitute; plant-based processed food*” was also rejected by the EUIPO: consumers, including those without strict dietary guidelines, would have risked purchasing the products under the belief that they were eggs or egg-based products (hen's eggs), and not alternatives. The sign would therefore have been capable of deceiving the public about the nature of the products.

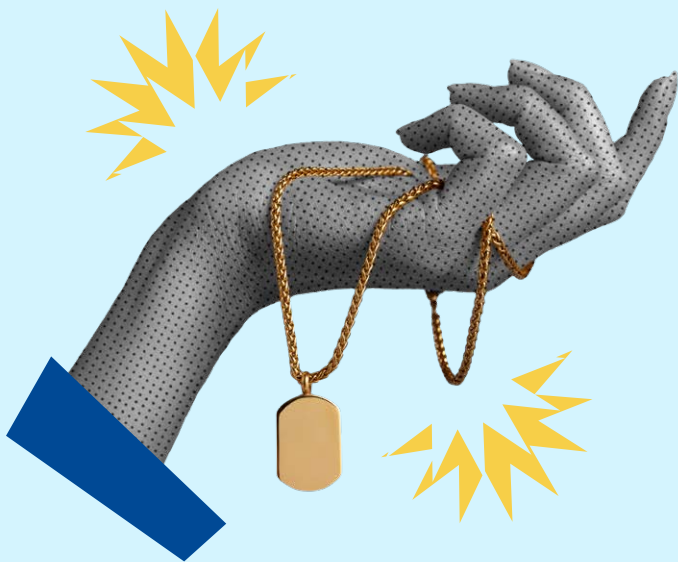
Therefore, when choosing the name under which a food product is to be marketed, it is always advisable – on the one hand – to ensure that it **is not descriptive** (i.e. that it does not evoke the claimed product) and – on the other hand – to ensure that **it cannot mislead the consumer about the characteristics of the product, its composition, its contents and its nutritional properties.**

Our professionals are available to provide further information and to assess any potential issues related to the descriptiveness or misleading nature of the names chosen for identifying products.

ITALY LAUNCHES ONLINE FILING FOR CRAFT AND INDUSTRIAL GIS AS OF 1 DECEMBER 2025

The Italian Council of Ministers has approved, on a preliminary basis, a draft legislative decree implementing **Regulation (EU) 2023/2411 on Geographical Indications (GIs) for craft and industrial products**, which will become protectable as of **1 December 2025**.

This decree constitutes the regulatory adjustment necessary to make the new European regulation on artisanal and industrial PGIs fully operational in Italy.



A New EU-Wide IP Right

As outlined in our [February newsletter](#), the new GI will constitute an **industrial property right valid across the entire European Union**, which will extend protection to products such as wooden objects, jewelry, textiles, lace, cutlery, glass, porcelain, ceramics, and leather, which are distinguished by their quality, reputation, or other characteristics attributable to their geographical origin.

It will function as an official seal of origin, quality and authenticity, strengthening the protection of national craft and industrial know-how and enhancing the international visibility of regional and local excellence.

As effect of the implementation of Regulation

(EU) 2023/2411, producers will be able to **prevent the use of protected names** for similar goods manufactured outside the designated geographical area, thereby providing a valuable tool against counterfeiting both online and offline.

In addition, the new system enables:

- **EU producers** to seek **international protection** for their GIs; and
- **non-EU producers** to obtain **EU-level protection** where they meet EU requirements.

Two-Phase Registration Procedure

While the EUIPO will be the central registration office, the new system introduces a **two-step registration process** for non-agricultural products:

1. National Phase

The application is filed and examined in the applicant's Member State.

2. European Phase

If the national phase concludes positively, the national authority forwards the application to the **European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO)**, which conducts the EU-level assessment, including any EU-wide oppositions. Once approved, the GI obtains **unitary protection throughout the EU**.

Key Provisions of the Italian Implementing Decree

For **Italy**, the preliminary decree designates the **Directorate-General for Industrial Property – Italian Patent and Trademark Office (DGPI-UIBM)** of the Ministry of Enterprises and Made in Italy as the competent authority for the entire national phase, including:

- receiving and examining applications;

- handling modifications to product specifications;
- managing national oppositions;
- cancelling registrations;
- liaising with **EUIPO**, the EU authority responsible for final GI registration.

The decree in particular sets out:

1. **Filing procedures** for producer associations, which must submit applications **exclusively via the UIBM online filing portal** (operational from 1 December 2025).
2. The **required content** of the application:
 - Product Specification (Art. 9)
 - Single Document (Art. 10), using the Regulation's template
 - Supporting Documentation (Art. 11)
3. The **administrative process**, examination timelines and publication in the official bulletin.
4. The designation of DGPI-UIBM as the **competent control authority**, including the ability to rely on the **Guardia di Finanza** for inspections and market monitoring.
5. The **extension of criminal offences** under Article 517-quater of the Italian Criminal Code to craft and industrial products, along

with a detailed system of administrative sanctions for usurpation, evocation, misleading practices, and non-compliance with product specifications.

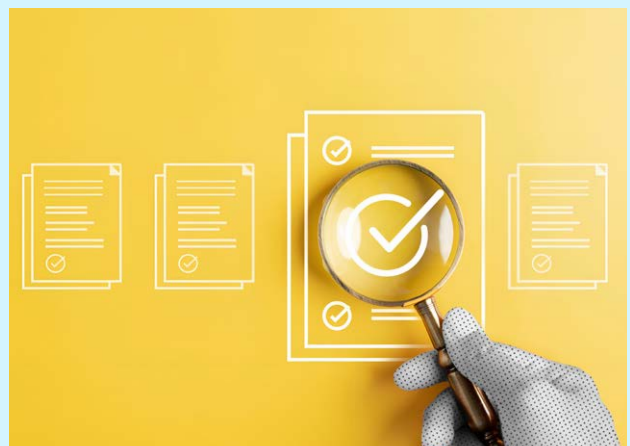
From 1 December 2025: Online Filing Becomes Available

From next 1 December producer associations will be able to submit GI applications for craft and industrial products directly through the **UIBM online portal**, with digital-signature-validated documentation.

National Examination and Next Steps

The DGPI-UIBM will first conduct a **formal check** (admissibility and completeness). The **substantive examination** and further national administrative steps will begin once the implementing decree formally enters into force, currently expected by **late January**.

We will continue to monitor developments and remain at your disposal should you require further details or strategic guidance on the protection of craft and industrial products under the new EU GI system.



NEW NICE CLASSIFICATION

The 13th edition of the Nice International Classification of Goods and Services will come into force on 1 January 2026.

The main changes include updating the terms for products and services, particularly those related to digital technology such as NFTs and

metaverses, and adjusting other categories. The changes mainly concern the following classes:

- Class 9: Items such as “**glasses**”, “**sunglasses**”, and “**contact lenses**” will migrate to Class 10.

- Class 12: It will include certain **emergency vehicles** (ambulances, fire engines, life rafts), which were previously included in Class 09.
- Class 42: Restructuring of **cloud software services**, reflecting technological and regulatory evolution in the IT sector.
- Class 35: Updates to **online sales services**, including more modern regulations and clearer criteria for e-commerce.

These changes aim to modernize the Classification, adapting it to new market needs and technological innovations, with greater precision and clarity in the definitions for each class.

The changes do not apply retroactively, however, trademark owners are advised to check whether these changes may impact the classes most important to their business.



ITALY RANKS 25TH IN THE PROTECTION OF PROPERTY RIGHTS

Italy has entered the world's Top 25 for property rights protection for the first time, according to the 2025 report of the **International Property Rights Index (IPRI)**. With a 16% increase compared to the previous year, the country has risen from 36th to 25th place, after a long period of stability in 46th position.

The IPRI measures the strength of property rights in a country, considering three main components:

- **LP (Legal and Political Environment)** → quality of institutions and rule of law
- **PPR (Physical Property Rights)** → protection of physical property and access to credit
- **IPR (Intellectual Property Rights)** → protection of **intellectual property** (patents, trademarks, copyright)

This achievement reflects an overall improvement in Italy's competitiveness and technological innovation, demonstrating the country's ability to innovate and grow economically.

Another recent report - the fifth edition of the **Report on Research and Innovation in Italy**, produced by three institutes of the National Research Council - highlighted that Italy maintains a solid presence in the more traditional sectors linked to advanced manufacturing, such as precision mechanics, transportation, and industrial engineering.

However, a critical issue also emerges from this report: the dispersion of technological knowledge. The increasing share of patents developed by Italian inventors but owned by foreign groups underscores a growing dependence on foreign business actors.

This phenomenon is even more significant

when one considers that patents developed by foreign inventors and owned by Italian entities are significantly fewer in number, particularly in emerging technology sectors.

On the other hand, a positive sign comes from the increasingly important role of Italian universities and research centers, which are experiencing gradual but steady growth in patenting activity, especially in knowledge-intensive sectors and protect their inventions on an international scale. Taking for example US patents issued to national universities as an index of innovation liveliness, the **Politecnico di Milano is the academic institution with the highest number of patents** registered in the United States, showing significant growth during the period taken into consideration (2002-2022). It is followed by the National Research Council, the University of Bari, the University of Bologna, and the Sapienza University of Rome.

In summary, both reports indicate that Italian innovation is alive and kicking and constantly growing.



The aim of this newsletter is to keep our Clients and Associates updated about developments in the sector of Intellectual Property in general and our firm in particular. In this way, we wish to provide a broader view of the tools that the field of trade marks, domain names, patents, designs and related rights offers to entrepreneurs to enhance and protect their efforts in researching and developing new solutions and ideas.



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