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## Wine labeling pact doubles

By Jen Haberkorn  
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An international pact designed to protect truth in wine labeling nearly doubled its membership last week.

The wine regions of Sonoma County and Paso Robles in California; Chianti Classico, Italy; Tokaj, Hungary; and Victoria and Western Australia, Australia, signed on to the joint declaration.

The agreement was put together in 2005 by the Center for Wine Origins, a D.C. campaign financed by the European Union and wine organizations representing Champagne, France, and Portugal. Its goal is to educate consumers on where their wine comes from. They want a bottle of wine with a "Napa Valley" label to actually contain Napa Valley grapes.

"It's all geared toward guaranteeing the consumers what they see on the label is what they get in the bottle," Peter McCrea, president of the board of directors of Napa Valley Vintners, said at a press conference last week.

Original members include wine groups representing the regions of Napa Valley, Calif.; Oregon; Washington state; Walla Walla (Wash.) Valley; Champagne, France; Porto, Portugal; and Jerez, Spain.

The 27-member European Union protects nearly all regional names, called "geographical indication," meaning it won't let a bottle of sparkling wine made outside of Champagne into the European Union with a "Champagne" label. The European Union just extended geographical indication status to Napa Valley wines.

The United States does not have a similar system. But the wine coalition is making strides in protecting wine labels in the United States. In 2005, the California Supreme Court ruled that a wine labeled "Napa Ridge" was required to use Napa Valley grapes or get rid of the label. Last year, California passed a law requiring a bottle of wine with a "Sonoma" label contain at least 75 percent wine made from Sonoma County grapes.

The wine regions also have been involved in educating Congress on the importance of place in wine labeling, with hopes of legislation or trade agreements protecting labels.