

## [No Cumberland sausages for you!](#) [1]

Written by [Anton Howes](#) [2] | Saturday 19 March 2011



The great Cumberland sausage has [won Protected Geographical Indication \(PGI\) status from the EU](#) [3], allowing it to join the privileged ranks of Cornish clotted cream and Stilton cheese. However, fans of Cumberland sausages will find that a particular group of Cumbrian producers will in fact benefit at their expense.

Along with other regulations regarding meat content and quality, the PGI mark essentially requires Cumberland sausages to be produced in Cumbria. First of all, this will mean producers outside of Cumbria will suffer. So will producers in Cumbria who don't already meet those quality requirements. They will all probably have to rename their sausages, losing customers in the process.

Due to the restriction of competition, Cumbrian producers who reach the PGI standards will then be able to hog the market and raise prices, causing true fans of Cumberland sausages to suffer. Whilst the Food minister Jim Paice seems to be proud of the award, it's really a matter of concentrated and visible gains for Cumbrian producers combined with costs dispersed amongst the pork-loving population.

Of course, the Cumberland sausage may well deserve to be recognised. Supporters of the move essentially think consumers have a right to know that their Cumberland sausages are the real deal. But this both stifles innovation, for example with new recipes and modifications used under the same brand, whilst also neglecting the fact that private non-governmental initiatives could achieve the same effect without harming consumers or other producers.

So why can't there be a stamp of some sort to indicate the real thing, leaving it up to shoppers to decide if they want it or not, without having to suffer raised prices and damaging the business of other sausage-makers? The answer is government - once it intervenes in this way, affected producers band together to influence legislation in their favour, as Adam Smith noted, "in a conspiracy against the public".

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