

OTHER ACTS

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Publication of an application for approval of minor amendments in accordance with the second subparagraph of Article 53(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council on quality schemes for agricultural products and foodstuffs

(2018/C 187/07)

The European Commission has approved this minor amendment application in accordance with the third subparagraph of Article 6(2) of Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No 664/2014 ⁽¹⁾.

APPLICATION FOR APPROVAL OF MINOR AMENDMENTS

Application for approval of minor amendments in accordance with the second subparagraph of Article 53(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council ⁽²⁾**'COMTÉ'****EU No: PDO-FR-0116-AM02 – 5.10.2017****PDO (X) PGI () TSG ()****1. Applicant group and legitimate interest**

Name: Comité interprofessionnel de Gestion du Comté (CIGC)
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The CIGC is made up of milk producers, processors and ripeners involved in the production of the 'Comté' PDO, and therefore it has a legitimate right to submit this application.

2. Member State or Third Country

France

3. Heading in the product specification affected by the amendment(s)

- Description of product
- Proof of origin
- Method of production
- Link
- Labelling
- Other: [Editorial changes: Geographical area, References to the inspection body]

4. Type of amendment(s)

- Amendment to the product specification of a registered PDO or PGI to be qualified as minor in accordance with the third subparagraph of Article 53(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012 and requiring no amendment to the published single document.

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 179, 19.6.2014, p. 17.

⁽²⁾ OJ L 343, 14.12.2012, p. 1.

- Amendment to the product specification of a registered PDO or PGI to be qualified as minor in accordance with the third subparagraph of Article 53(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012 and requiring an amendment to the published single document.
- Amendment to the product specification of a registered PDO or PGI to be qualified as minor in accordance with the third subparagraph of Article 53(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012, for which a single document (or equivalent) has not been published.
- Amendment to the product specification of a registered TSG to be qualified as minor in accordance with the fourth subparagraph of Article 53(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012.

5. Amendment(s)

Chapter 5. 'Description of the method of production'

Sub-chapter 5.1.18 'Milking':

The provision of the current specification whereby 'Milking must take place twice a day, at regular times in the morning and evening, and therefore self-service milking is not possible.' has been replaced by: 'Milking must take place twice a day, at regular times in the morning and evening, and therefore self-service milking is not possible. The use of a robotic milkers is prohibited.'

The provision 'Self-service milking is not possible' in the current specification aims at preserving the know-how and the image of the 'Comté' PDO. At the time of drafting the provision of the current specification, which coincided with the appearance of the very first prototypes of robotic milkers, it was not possible for the provision to be more specific. Today it seems preferable to explicitly ban robotic milkers.

After all, the know-how involves a specific action at each stage of the method of production of 'Comté':

- Milking by the farmer,
- Draining of the vat by the cheesemaker,
- Sorting of the cheeses by the ripener.

Milking for the purpose of making a raw-milk cheese requires the breeder to have specific expertise. The aim is to preserve the raw milk's flora during this critical phase of the production process. The breeder is the only one capable of determining case-by-case the best method of cleaning the teats so as to guarantee that the milk can express its full potential, which is the source of the cheese's typical characteristics. Besides, milking is a valuable opportunity for the breeder to be present and monitor the health of his herd, detect even slight signals in the animals' behaviour and then act before any problems appear.

Using a robotic milker would therefore partly undermine the principle of producing 'Comté' using traditional know-how guaranteeing the typical characteristics of the cheese.

This wording also allows the operator to better understand the production requirement and makes checks easier.

Other: updating of the wording

Under the heading 'Definition of the geographical area', the list of municipalities comprising the geographical area has been updated following the merger of certain municipalities, without changes to the perimeter.

The heading 'References to the inspection body' has been updated:

- The name and contact details of the responsible department of the Member State have been included.
- The name and contact details of the certification body have been replaced by: 'In accordance with the provisions of Article 37 of Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012, verification of compliance with the specification, before placing the product on the market, is carried out by a product certification body whose name and contact details are available on the INAO's website and in the European Commission's database.'

Single document:

In the published single document, the wording of the description of the geographical area has been updated owing to changes to the perimeter of certain cantons, without this affecting the perimeter of the geographical area.

6. Updated product specification (only for PDO and PGI)

https://info.agriculture.gouv.fr/gedei/site/bo-agri/document_administratif-d4e5a722-a6f6-4790-a181-94ea41f1a5dd

SINGLE DOCUMENT

'COMTÉ'

EU No: PDO-FR-0116-AM02 – 5.10.2017

PDO (X) PGI ()

1. Name(s)

'Comté'

2. Member State or Third Country

France

3. Description of the agricultural product or foodstuff

3.1. Type of product

Class 1.3. Cheeses

3.2. Description of the product to which the name in 1 applies

'Comté' is made of cow's milk used in raw condition. It is a cheese with pressed, cooked paste that is salted on the surface or in brine. At the time of marketing, which takes place after a minimum ripening period of 120 days, the cheese's paste has an ivory to yellow colour and generally an 'opening' that may reach the size of a small cherry.

'Comté' contains a minimum of 45 g and a maximum of 54 g of fat per 100 g of cheese after total desiccation and has a dry matter content not below 62 g per 100 g of cheese. The salt content is not less than 0,6 g of sodium chloride per 100 g of cheese. The water content of the defatted cheese does not exceed 54 %.

'Comté' is presented to consumers in the form of a wheel that weighs 32 to 45 kg and has a diameter of 55 to 75 centimetres and a straight or slightly convex heel 8-13 cm in height. It has a scrubbed, solid and grainy rind that is golden yellow to brown in colour. The cheese must not be more than 1,4 times higher at the centre than at the outer rim.

'Comté' may also be presented in packaged portions or grated.

'Comté' has a complex taste. While the general sensorial features of all the wheels are the same, no two wheels of Comté are identical. Six main groups of aromas can be distinguished in 'Comté' (fruity, milky, roasted, plant-like, animal-like, spicy) and they include more than 90 nuances.

3.3. Feed (for products of animal origin only) and raw materials (for processed products only)

The milk comes from a dairy herd of Montbéliarde cows of breed type 46, or from French Simmental cows of breed type 35, or from crosses of these two breeds of certified descent.

The milk is collected from within a circular area measuring no more than 25 km in diameter. This rule limits the duration of transport and therefore protects the milk from structural degradation. This ensures that the milk is processed in the conditions laid down in the specification (raw milk). These conditions favour the development of endogenous lactic flora.

In order to maintain the quality and specificity of the product, the productivity of milk animals is limited per hectare of potential forage areas.

As regards the use of the milk, the capacity of the vats is limited to a maximum of 12 cheeses per vat in order to guarantee the quality of the product. Over a period of 24 hours not more than three production rounds may be carried out in the same vat.

In order to guarantee a close link between the region and the product by using specific feed from the geographical area, supplementary feed is limited to 1 800 kg per dairy cow per year. On the farm, the grazing area actually used is at least equal to 1 hectare per dairy cow. Grazing is obligatory for as long as the weather conditions, the soils' bearing capacity and the presence of grass allow. Compliance with these provisions means that at least 70 % of the herd's feed comes from the geographical area. The dairy cows' basic intake comes entirely from the geographical area.

In order to maintain the traditional practice of grazing, farm production systems where all the feed is supplied in troughs during the growing season are forbidden and grazing remains the main practice.

Fermented fodder, whether silage products or other, are not to be used in the feed of the dairy herd at any time of the year owing to the technological risks related to these practices during the production and refining of cheeses.

Only raw materials and supplementary feed derived from non-transgenic products are authorised for the dairy herd so as to preserve the traditional nature of the feed.

3.4. *Specific steps in production that must take place in the defined geographical area*

The milk is produced and the cheeses manufactured and refined in the geographical area.

3.5. *Specific rules concerning slicing, grating, packaging, etc. of the product the registered name refers to*

The procedure of cutting and packaging pieces of 'Comté' is part of an extended refining process. It requires particular know-how and has a direct and definite effect on the quality of the product, because it is necessary to sort the wheels to remove those that may not be fit for prepacking. These conditions make it possible to comply fully with the conditions for preserving the cheese after it has been formed into wheels and to guarantee the physical and organoleptic integrity of 'Comté' until it reaches the consumer.

If the cheese is prepacked, these are the reasons for cutting or grating it in the geographical area.

If the cheese is prepacked,

- the wheels may be cut within not more than two weeks of leaving the ripening cellar. During this time they are kept at a temperature of 4 °C to 8 °C with a humidity level at least equal to 85 %,
- the rind may be removed from portions weighing less than 40 grams each or intended to be grated. If the rind is too moist or if it has deteriorated, it is removed immediately after the cheese has been cut into portions. If the rind is in good condition, it is removed within 8 hours of the first cutting. Pieces whose rind has been removed may not be stored in the open air for more than 72 hours; after that, they are vacuum-packed. Vacuum-packing must take place within two weeks,
- no simultaneous operations involving a product other than 'Comté' take place on the cutting and packaging line.

The cheese may be cut and grated outside the geographical area if this is done in front of the consumer.

3.6. *Specific rules concerning labelling of the product the registered name refers to*

All cheeses with the registered designation of origin 'Comté' bear a label showing the designation in a font at least two thirds as large as the largest font shown on the label.

The label contains the European Union PDO logo. It may also include the words 'appellation d'origine protégée' ('protected designation of origin').

The producer, refiner or prepacker affixes its name and address clearly, and the address must be located in the geographical area.

The use of any term or other reference accompanying the designation is prohibited on the labelling and in advertising, invoices or commercial documents, with the exception of specific trademarks.

Cheeses sold under the designation of origin 'Comté' bear the required identifying marks. Prior to the cheese leaving the ripening cellar, a green or brick-brown band is affixed to the side of each wheel. Each packaged portion bears the 'Comté clochettes vertes' logo featuring small green bells. For consumer portions, it is obligatory to affix the 'Comté clochettes vertes' logo and the name 'Comté' on the front in a font at least two thirds as large as the largest font using the Pantone 349C green colour code.

If the wheel is sold whole, it bears on the side under the band an oval-shaped green casein plate bearing the following words printed in black: France, 'Comté', the number of the production plant and the production month. The production day is indicated using a casein plate placed near the green casein plate.

4. Concise definition of the geographical area

In Ain:

The cantons of Bellegarde-Sur-Valserine, Nantua, Oyonnax, Pont-d'Ain, Thoiry.

The cantons of Ambérieu-En-Bugey, except for the municipalities of Château-Gaillard and Saint-Maurice de Remens; of Gex, except for the municipalities of Sauverny and Versonnex; of Hauteville-Lompnes, except for the municipality of Armix; of Saint-Etienne-Du-Bois, except for the municipalities of Marboz, Cormoz and Beaupont.

The municipalities of Saint-Benoît, Ceyzeriat, Druillat, Journans, Revonnas, Saint-Martin-du-Mont, Tossiat, Bénonces, Briord, Groslée-Saint-Benoit (only Groslée), Innimond, Lhuis, Lompnas, Marchamp, Montagnieu, Ordonnaz, Saint-Sorlin-en-Bugey, Sault-Brénaz, Seillonaz, Serrières-De-Briord, Souclin, Villebois.

In Doubs:

The cantons of Besançon, Frasne, Morteau, Ornans, Pontarlier, Saint-Vit, Valdahon.

The cantons of Baume-Les-Dames, except for the municipalities of Abbenans, Avilley, Bonnal, Cubrial, Cubry, Cuse-et-Adrisans, Fontenelle-Montby, Gondenans-Montby, Gondenans-les-Moulins, Gouhelans, Huanne-Montmartin, Mesandans, Mondon, Montagney-Servigney, Montussaint, Nans, Puessans, Rognon, Romain, Rougemont, Tallans, Tournans, Tressandans, Trouvans, Uzelle, Viethorey; of Maïche, except for Bondeval, Thulay, Meslières, Abbevillers; of Valentigney, except for the municipalities of Bourguignon, Écot, Mandeuve, Mathay.

The municipalities of Anteuil, Belvoir, Branne, Chauv-lès-Clerval, Chazot, Crosey-le-Grand, Crosey-le-Petit, Fontaine-lès-Clerval, (L') Hôpital-Saint-Lieffroy, Hyémondans, Lanans, Lanthenans, Orve, Pays de Clerval, Pompierre-sur-Doubs, Rahon, Randevillers, Roche-lès-Clerval, Saint-Georges-Armont, Sancey, Servin, Surmont, Valonne, Vaudrivillers, Vellerot-lès-Belvoir, Vellefans, Vernois-lès-Belvoir, Vyt-lès-Belvoir.

In the Jura:

The entire department, except for the municipalities of Annoire, Aumur, Champdivers, Chemin, Longwy-sur-le-Doubs, Molay, Pesieux, Petit-Noir, Saint-aubin, Saint-Loup, Tavaux.

In Saône-et-Loire:

The municipalities of Beaurepaire-En-Bresse, Beauvernois, Bellevesvre, Fretterans, Mouthier-en-Bresse, Savigny-en-Revermont, Saillenard, Torpes, Flacey-en-Bresse, Joudes, Cuiseaux, Champagnat, Sagy.

In Haute-Savoie:

The municipality of Challonges (just two parcels).

5. Link with the geographical area

The geographical area comprises the arc of the Jura mountains, a set of limestone plateaux, and its extension into a small part of the adjoining plain.

The agricultural areas in question are characterised by their poor soils and significant contours and by the calcareous and molassic nature of the geological substratum.

The climate of the area tends towards both continental and northern with big temperature differences between the seasons and rainfall that, although it is even throughout the year, is heavy in the summer, with a low annual average temperature and a high number of days of frost.

It is a very wet mountain or sub-mountain environment with annual rainfall always in excess of 900 mm and generally in excess of 1 000 mm. This rainfall is already considerable at low altitude and increases towards the interior of the mountain range. Seasonal distribution is characterised by the lack of a dry season.

This area is divided between woodland and grassland. The area's particular geo-climatic conditions (heavy rainfall, no summer drought, etc.) contribute very favourably to high-quality grass production. They allow the development of natural grassland that has a very rich flora (dicotyledons, in particular) and a specific, principally limestone, flora.

In this area which is well-suited to grazing, dairy cows feed in this manner for as long as the weather conditions, the soils' bearing capacity and the presence of grass allow. Breeders have selected the Montbéliarde breed, which is well adapted to the conditions in the area and makes up nearly all of the dairy herds in the geographical area. The extensive farming of grassland has been maintained (stocking density and the use of nitrogen and concentrates, etc. are limited). In addition, the geographical area has a particular 'cheese-making tradition'. This tradition, based on the pooling of milk for the purpose of making a large cheese, has led to a strong sense of solidarity and common rules.

Since the 11th century farmers in this region have worked together to pool every day the milk produced by their various herds in order to make a large wheel. Still today the great majority of milk producers belong to cooperatives and pool their milk in a processing plant called 'fruitière', the local cheese dairy.

The traditional methods of making this cheese live on and are maintained, on the one hand, in the way the animals are bred using a specific system for the management of pastures and the drying of mowed grass and, on the other, in the way the cheese is made by carefully timing the cutting of the curd, its stirring and heating, the extraction and pressing and then the salting, prerefining and refining.

'Comté' is a cheese made from raw cow's milk. It has a cooked pressed paste and is in the shape of a large wheel 55 to 75 cm in diameter. It is refined for a long time and is therefore a long-keeping cheese.

'Comté' has a limited fat content and this distinguishes it from other cheeses with a cooked pressed paste.

'Comté' has a complex taste. While the general sensorial features of all the wheels are the same, no two wheels of Comté are identical. Six main groups of aromas can be distinguished (fruity, milky, roasted, plant-like, animal-like, spicy) and they include more than 90 nuances.

It is in this difficult environment, where the landscape is divided between woodland and grassland and where it was impossible to develop other resources, that large hard cheeses became the product of choice. For the people living on this land, a long-keeping cheese was the only preserved food that could be made from the abundant supply of summer milk and that would keep through the long winter. Therefore local breeders selected a cow breed that was particularly well suited to the local conditions and to the making of a particular cheese. The milk was pooled in the 'fruitières' for the purpose of producing a large, long-keeping cheese that would allow the breeders to make the best use of the richness of this land outside the geographical area. The choice of a cheese with a cooked paste was based on the abundance of firewood in the area.

The distinctive characteristics of the grassland are expressed in the cheese with the help of specific expertise applied at every production stage.

First of all, the great floral richness of the natural environment of the geographical area contributes strongly to the development of the cheese's aromatic components. This diversity is preserved through the extensive farming of the grassland by the breeders. The close link between floral diversity and the rich aroma of 'Comté' was demonstrated by two scientific studies in 1994. By limiting the fat content during cheese-making it is possible to avoid off-tastes due to lipolysis and reinforce the typical aromas of 'Comté'. By laying down a minimum dry matter content and a maximum water content for the defatted cheese, it is possible to avoid excess water in the cheese and help bring out all the aromas. The aromas are enhanced also by the minimum salt content of the cheese. The obligation to use open vats allows the cheesemakers to maintain their skills, such as the correct timing of the cutting of the curd and of the extraction. Finally, the ripeners use their know-how to carefully adjust the ripening conditions of each lot. The cheese's aroma, which is the result of natural factors such as the grass and the microbe ecosystem, is fully developed only after a long period of ripening on spruce boards, which are particularly well suited to the ripening of 'Comté'. The production of 'Comté' allows the maintenance of traditional agricultural activities and contributes greatly to achieving a balanced local economy.

Reference to publication of the specification

(the second subparagraph of Article 6(1) of this Regulation)

https://info.agriculture.gouv.fr/gedei/site/bo-agri/document_administratif-d4e5a722-a6f6-4790-a181-94ea41f1a5dd
