

Publication of an amendment application pursuant to Article 6(2) of Council Regulation (EC) No 510/2006 on the protection of geographical indications and designations of origin for agricultural products and foodstuffs

(2012/C 64/15)

This publication confers the right to object to the amendment application pursuant to Article 7 of Council Regulation (EC) No 510/2006 ⁽¹⁾. Statements of objection must reach the Commission within six months of the date of this publication.

AMENDMENT APPLICATION

COUNCIL REGULATION (EC) No 510/2006

AMENDMENT APPLICATION ACCORDING TO ARTICLE 9

‘PROVOLONE VALPADANA’

EC No: IT-PDO-0217-0021-27.01.2010

PDO (X) PGI ()

1. Heading in the product specification affected by the amendment:

- Name of product
- Description of product
- Geographical area
- Proof of origin
- Method of production
- Link
- Labelling
- National requirements
- Other (to be specified)

2. Type of amendment(s):

- Amendment to single document or summary sheet
- Amendment to specification of registered PDO or PGI for which neither the single document nor the Summary has been published
- Amendment to specification that requires no amendment to the published single document (Article 9(3) of Regulation (EC) No 510/2006)
- Temporary amendment to specification resulting from imposition of obligatory sanitary or phytosanitary measures by public authorities (Article 9(4) of Regulation (EC) No 510/2006)

3. Amendment(s):

Article 3 of the Prime Ministerial Decree of 9 April 1993 which established the designation of origin of ‘Provolone Valpadana’, together with the files contained in the Commission documents, provides the full text of the specification on the basis of which Community recognition of the product name was obtained in accordance with Regulation (EC) No 1107/96.

As with all the specifications set out, the drawing up of the measure was found to be very inconsistent and some of the production phases were not detailed enough, thus the documentation sent in 1993 was a series of answers to the various points in Article 4 of Regulation (EEC) No 2081/92 and it was felt necessary to provide a wording that was non-descriptive but clearer and more useful for the producers, consumers and supervising bodies.

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 93, 31.3.2006, p. 12.

Therefore, some phases have been made clearer and some parameters drawn up in order for points to be numbered and a more detailed description of how cattle are fed has also been included.

This stipulates, for example, the need to emphasise that milk must not be collected when more than 60 hours have elapsed after milking, just as clarifying the importance of milk ferment cultures ('Provolone Valpadana' is among the few PDO cheeses produced using whey starter from earlier processing).

3.1. *Description of product:*

1. Weight classes have been specified with the relative maturation periods, doing away with minimum and maximum weights. The restrictions posed by the initial weight classes do not adequately reflect the changed market situation. The removal of the weight classes is also strictly linked to a more specific description of the maturation period and the more precise clarification of the mild and piquant varieties.
2. It is specified that the mild variety will be divided and packaged in portions and will have no rind. Having no rind means that the cheese can be prepared in advance and facilitates cutting and packaging.
3. A maximum water content has been introduced — indicating the maximum water content is an important production restriction since it obliges companies to respect certain parameters and failure to do so would mean that the cheese production could be confused with generic pasta filata cheeses or even, scamorza.
4. It was clarified that the fat in dry matter cannot be less than 44 % or more than 54 %. This clarification was deemed necessary as the 1993 production specification indicated a single percentage value of fat content in dry matter without taking into account the effect of some variables linked to the production process. The period proposed, in keeping with the production of milk products, takes technical reasons into account such as the seasonal variability of the chemical composition of the milk in terms of fat and protein as well as the variability of the cheese composition during ripening.

3.2. *Area of production:*

Two municipalities have been included: Nogaredo and Nomi from the Autonomous Province of Trento. These two municipalities have always been part of a single, continuous production area, as is evident from map files. Mistakenly missing out Nogaredo and Nomi (see the Prime Ministerial Decree of 21 August 1993) would in fact unjustifiably interrupt the geographical area's continuity with regard to the content of the original 1994 documentation for the registration of the name, as contained in the Commission documents.

Please also note that the municipalities listed in Article 2 of the Prime Ministerial Decree of 21 August 1993, which previously fell under the Province of Milan, now belong to the Province of Lodi established by Legislative Decree No 251 of 6 March 1992, implementing Article 63 of Law No 142 of 8 June 1990. Consequently, the product specification has been updated.

3.3. *Method of production:*

As regards other aspects, it is made clear that:

1. 'Provolone Valpadana' is obtained from raw whole cows' milk, which for the mild variety undergoes heat treatment until it is fully pasteurised while for the piquant variety it undergoes thermisation.

Heat treatments were already in use before the Protected Designation of Origin was recognised and are designed to guarantee the wholesomeness of the product, to destroy pathogenic organisms and organisms inhibiting cheese production, to manage the ripening processes with the microorganisms typical of the product and to enhance the product from a taste, probiotic and nutritional standpoint.

The heat treatment for the mild variety (pasteurisation: heating the milk to 72 °C for 15 seconds — negative phosphatase) is possible if a strong preventative microbiological action is required on the raw material since it is a cheese sold with a short ripening period. The heat treatment for the piquant variety (thermisation: simple heating which must not exceed 55 °C for 5/10 seconds — positive phosphatase) leaves the organoleptic and qualitative characteristics of the milk almost unaltered because the maturation itself of piquant 'Provolone Valpadana' inhibits abnormal fermentation and destroys any other unwanted microorganisms.

2. The coagulation phase is made clearer. 'Provolone Valpadana' has two varieties (mild and piquant), therefore the different uses of rennet are indicated which differentiate the two.
 3. The hardening phase is made clearer. Soaking the cheese in cold or chilled water has become an essential factor in ensuring a faster cooling of the cheese in order to avoid the unwelcome occurrence of 'late swelling'.
 4. The drying phase is made clearer. The drying process also plays an important role in avoiding 'late swelling'.
 5. Maturation times have been modified to reduce the minimum maturation period since, for important commercial reasons, the production now involves smaller cheeses which need less time to mature. In fact, reducing the minimum maturation period from 30 to 10 days is considered necessary because the organoleptic qualities of the smaller cheeses (maximum 6 kg) are already present by the time indicated. It is possible to compare the difference with other generic products (pasta filata cheeses) after this time limit and therefore to supply the market with a cheese with unmistakable qualities.
 6. The possibility of treating the exterior of the 'Provolone Valpadana' during the course of maturation was introduced in order to protect it from mould and mites. The treatment of the cheese exterior involves covering materials containing antifungals or plastic or paraffin wraps. These materials cover the entire product while allowing the cheese to breathe, without interfering with the natural processes of maturation.
- 3.4. *Labelling:*
1. More detail has been added to the part relating to the designation and presentation of the product when sold for consumption. This change was necessary to provide the consumer with more specific and accurate information.

SINGLE DOCUMENT

COUNCIL REGULATION (EC) No 510/2006

'PROVOLONE VALPADANA'

EC No: IT-PDO-0217-0021-27.01.2010

PGI () PDO (X)

1. **Name:**

'Provolone Valpadana'

2. **Member State or third country:**

Italy

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 point 1 applies:*

'Semi-hard pasta filata cheese produced with raw whole cows' milk with natural acidity from fermentation, collected in the area of origin within 60 hours which can undergo:

- for the mild variety — heat treatment until the cheese is pasteurised,
- for the piquant variety, thermisation'.

The maturation period can vary as follows:

- up to 6 kg: minimum maturation period 10 days,
- over 6 kg: minimum maturation period 30 days,
- over 15 kg and only for the piquant variety: minimum maturation period 90 days,

— over 30 kg with the product labelling P.V.S., piquant variety: maturation period over 8 months.

The cheese may also be smoked.

The weight may vary with regard to the shape.

The different shapes can be: sausage shape, melon ball shape, truncated-cone shape, pear shape with a sphere on top known as a 'fiaschetta'; the external surface may show small indents from the supporting cords.

The rind is smooth, thin, of a light yellow, golden colour and sometimes yellow-brown. The mild variety to be divided into portions may have no rind.

The cheese is generally compact with occasional small holes; some flaking of the cheese is common for those with a shorter maturation while a more marked flaking is typical of cheeses with a longer maturation period; it is generally of a pale yellow colour.

The cheese has a delicate taste at three months' maturation which becomes stronger in the piquant cheese with a longer maturation or when goat or lamb rennet are used either alone or together.

The maximum water content must not:

- exceed 46 % for all varieties of the mild cheese and for the piquant varieties weighing up to 6 kg,
- exceed 43 % for the piquant varieties weighing more than 6 kg.

The fat in dry matter should not be less than 44 % or more than 54 %.

3.3. Raw materials (for processed products only):

Milk, rennet, salt.

3.4. Animal feed (for products of animal origin only):

The basic feed for the dairy cattle, made up of fodder (fresh or dried), feed or feed-concentrates must come from no less than 50 % of the zone of origin and must be applied to lactating cows, dry cows and heifers over seven months old. At least 75 % of the dry matter of the fodder in the daily ration should come from feed produced in the milk production area. The fodder allowed is: fresh fodder from permanent or temporary meadows, fodder crops, hay obtained from drying the crops in the field, straw from cereals, grass silage, chopped grass and hay silage. The feed allowed is: cereals and cereal products, corn mash, oilseeds and oilseed products, tubers and roots, dry fodder, products of the sugar industry such as molasses and/or derivatives alone such as processing aids and flavours up to a limit of 2,5 % of dry matter in the daily ration. Also permitted are: legume seeds and dried locust beans and their derivatives, fats, mineral salts authorised by the legislation in force and additives such as vitamins, trace elements, amino acids, flavourings and antioxidants authorised by the legislation in force with the added requirement that any antioxidants and flavourings used must be natural or nature-identical. The use of inactive brewer's yeast as a carrier of 'premixtures' is permitted.

3.5. Specific steps in production that must take place in the identified geographical area:

All the steps in the production phase must take place in the identified geographical area.

3.6. Specific rules concerning slicing, grating, packaging, etc.:

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3.7. Specific rules concerning labelling:

All whole cheeses must bear the logo of the protected designation of origin 'Provolone Valpadana' which must be reproduced on a suitable tamper-proof holder (metal, plastic).

The labelling must take place when the cheeses are hung for maturation in the storage areas.

Before whole cheeses are placed on the market, the 'Provolone Valpadana' can be customised using card strips, stickers, packaging or similar material. For each of the previously mentioned modes of customisation, the logo and explicit mention of the Protected Designation of Origin 'Provolone Valpadana' must be shown on no less than a sixth of the surface area occupied by the commercial brand, with the exception of cheeses weighing less than 6 kg.

For labels using printed stamps, the name 'Provolone Valpadana' must be shown within the limits described excluding the requirement to show the product logo.

Exclusively for the piquant variety, from the eighth month of maturation, holders of 'Provolone Valpadana' can request a fire marking of the acronym 'P.V.S.', which stands for 'Provolone Valpadana Stagionato'. In order to display the abovementioned brand, the cheese must undergo a technical check by specialists that has been expressly requested by the holder and is at his own cost. The selective check concerns the external appearance of the cheese (which should not exhibit cracks and on tapping the cheese, the sound must be uniform), the cheese structure (with flaking, no holes and not elastic), the colour (white bordering on straw yellow), the flavour (the piquant variety should have a kick and not be salty) and the aroma (intense together with the odour).

The logo, including the name, must be reproduced on the packs intended for final consumers in proportion to the packaging used so as to take up no less than 10 % of the surface space available. The name 'Provolone Valpadana' should be shown in the same fashion. The indication 'Denominazione d'Origine Protetta' may be replaced by the Community symbol.

The logo can also be used in a monochrome version.

4. Concise definition of the geographical area:

The entire territory of the provinces of Cremona, Brescia, Verona, Vicenza, Rovigo, Padova, Piacenza and adjoining municipalities of the provinces of Bergamo, Mantova and Lodi and the Autonomous Province of Trento make up a single geographical area.

5. Link with the geographical area:

5.1. Specificity of the geographical area:

The geographical production area includes part of the Po Valley and is known for its high production of fodder, its large quantities of milk available and climatic conditions that are particularly suitable for feeding and breeding dairy cattle breeds. Thanks to these environmental factors, the ideal conditions for producing 'Provolone Valpadana' cheese originated in the production area.

'Provolone Valpadana' is a pasta filata cheese and despite originating from the south of Italy, this type of cheese (thanks to the Padana cheese-making tradition, which was never lacking in technical expertise or abundance of raw materials to work with) has made a name for itself in northern Italy. The use of natural whey inoculum derived from whey residues from earlier processing, the dairy know-how of dairy producers from the area in skilfully using different lamb, goat and calf rennets, and the hand-made expertise in the kneading and working of the cheese are of particular importance in the production of 'Provolone Valpadana'.

5.2. Specificity of the product:

'Provolone Valpadana' is known for its delicate flavour in cheeses which have matured for up to three months which becomes stronger in the piquant variety with the passing of time and according to the type of rennet used. 'Provolone Valpadana' also comes in different shapes such as a sausage shape, melon ball shape, truncated-cone shape, pear shape and in sizes which can exceed 30 kg. The cheese is compact but not dry unlike pasta filata cheeses from southern Italy which, because of their smaller size, can mature and become piquant just by drying and turning into grating cheeses.

5.3. Causal link between the geographical area and the quality or characteristics of the product (for PDO) or a specific quality, the reputation or other characteristic of the product (for PGI):

'Provolone Valpadana' has been produced in the specified geographical area since the second half of the 19th century and although the pasta filata cheese originates from southern Italy, in the 20th century it made a name for itself in northern Italy as witnessed by the works of Besana (1916) and Fascetti (1923).

The expansion in the production of 'Provolone Valpadana' was aided by the Padana producers' technical cheese-making capabilities that developed over time thanks to the geographical area's particularly suitable conditions for breeding cows that produce a large quantity of milk for processing. Among the typical characteristics of the production method of 'Provolone Valpadana' is the use of whey from earlier processing as a whey-starter for further processing. This process forms a very characteristic part of the production of 'Provolone Valpadana' both in terms of the territory and the method used since it is rarely used in cheese production. Refining the production techniques has had an effect on the commercial characteristics of the cheese, such as the shape and size of

'Provolone Valpadana' without changing the essential characteristics. The different shapes and sizes of 'Provolone Valpadana' are the result of the ability of the local cheese-makers from the geographical area, through the kneading operation, to make the cheese malleable enough to be able to work it into different shapes and quite significant sizes. These commercial characteristics can be attributed to the geographical production area since this is where they have been developed and passed down. The coexistence of the two varieties of cheese, mild and piquant, is the result of the dairy producers' capabilities in using different rennets which allow the 'Provolone Valpadana' to have the delicate or piquant flavours that are typical of the product even with a similar process to produce, respectively, smaller cheeses with a shorter maturation period or heavier cheeses with a longer maturation period, with a compact cheese that is never so dry as to require grating as with more typical pasta filata cheeses from the south of Italy.

Reference to publication of the specification:

(Article 5(7) of Regulation (EC) No 510/2006)

This Ministry launched the national objection procedure referred to in Article 5(5) of Regulation (EC) No 510/2006 with the proposed amendments to PDO 'Provolone Valpadana' in the *Official Gazette of the Italian Republic* No 291 of 15 December 2009.

The full text of the product specification is available on the following website:

<http://www.politicheagricole.it/flex/cm/pages/ServeBLOB.php/L/IT/IDPagina/3335>

or

by going directly to the home page of the Ministry of Agricultural, Food and Forestry Policy (<http://www.politicheagricole.it>) and clicking on 'Qualità e sicurezza' (in the top right hand corner of the screen) and then on 'Disciplinari di Produzione all'esame dell'UE'.
