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⁽¹⁾ Text with EEA relevance.

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II

*(Information)*INFORMATION FROM EUROPEAN UNION INSTITUTIONS, BODIES, OFFICES
AND AGENCIES

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Non-opposition to a notified concentration**(Case M.8853 — AXA/CDC/Cible dans Toulon Grand Var)****(Text with EEA relevance)**

(2018/C 135/01)

On 10 April 2018, the Commission decided not to oppose the above notified concentration and to declare it compatible with the internal market. This decision is based on Article 6(1)(b) of Council Regulation (EC) No 139/2004 ⁽¹⁾. The full text of the decision is available only in French and will be made public after it is cleared of any business secrets it may contain. It will be available:

- in the merger section of the Competition website of the Commission (<http://ec.europa.eu/competition/mergers/cases/>). This website provides various facilities to help locate individual merger decisions, including company, case number, date and sectoral indexes,
- in electronic form on the EUR-Lex website (<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/homepage.html?locale=en>) under document number 32018M8853. EUR-Lex is the online access to European law.

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 24, 29.1.2004, p. 1.

IV

(Notices)

NOTICES FROM EUROPEAN UNION INSTITUTIONS, BODIES, OFFICES AND
AGENCIES

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Euro exchange rates ⁽¹⁾**16 April 2018**

(2018/C 135/02)

1 euro =

Currency	Exchange rate	Currency	Exchange rate
USD US dollar	1,2370	CAD Canadian dollar	1,5596
JPY Japanese yen	132,77	HKD Hong Kong dollar	9,7104
DKK Danish krone	7,4473	NZD New Zealand dollar	1,6853
GBP Pound sterling	0,86465	SGD Singapore dollar	1,6221
SEK Swedish krona	10,4045	KRW South Korean won	1 328,33
CHF Swiss franc	1,1878	ZAR South African rand	14,9467
ISK Iceland króna	122,00	CNY Chinese yuan renminbi	7,7726
NOK Norwegian krone	9,5950	HRK Croatian kuna	7,4128
BGN Bulgarian lev	1,9558	IDR Indonesian rupiah	17 039,98
CZK Czech koruna	25,265	MYR Malaysian ringgit	4,8057
HUF Hungarian forint	310,30	PHP Philippine peso	64,387
PLN Polish zloty	4,1627	RUB Russian rouble	76,9420
RON Romanian leu	4,6508	THB Thai baht	38,644
TRY Turkish lira	5,0816	BRL Brazilian real	4,2300
AUD Australian dollar	1,5928	MXN Mexican peso	22,3399
		INR Indian rupee	81,0175

⁽¹⁾ Source: reference exchange rate published by the ECB.

Opinion of the Advisory Committee on restrictive practices and dominant positions given at its meeting on 20 November 2017 regarding a preliminary draft decision relating to Case AT.39881 — Occupant Safety Systems supplied to Japanese Car Manufacturers

Rapporteur: Luxembourg

(2018/C 135/03)

1. The Advisory Committee agrees with the Commission that the anticompetitive behaviour covered by the draft decision constitutes four separate agreements and/or concerted practices between undertakings within the meaning of Article 101 of the TFEU and Article 53 of the EEA Agreement.
2. The Advisory Committee agrees with the Commission's assessment of the product and geographic scope for each of the four agreements and/or concerted practices contained in the draft decision.
3. The Advisory Committee agrees with the Commission that the undertakings concerned by the draft decision participated in the four single and continuous infringements of Article 101 of the TFEU and Article 53 of the EEA Agreement, as spelled out in the draft decision.
4. The Advisory Committee agrees with the Commission that the object of the four agreements and/or concerted practices was to restrict competition within the meaning of Article 101 of the TFEU and Article 53 of the EEA Agreement.
5. The Advisory Committee agrees with the Commission that the four agreements and/or concerted practices were capable of appreciably affecting trade between the Member States of the EU.
6. The Advisory Committee agrees with the Commission's assessment as regards the duration of the four infringements.
7. The Advisory Committee agrees with the Commission's draft decision as regards the addressees in respect of each of the four infringements.
8. The Advisory Committee agrees with the Commission's draft decision as regards the role of Marutaka as facilitator of one of the four infringements.
9. The Advisory Committee agrees with the Commission that a fine should be imposed on the addressees of the draft decision for each of the four infringements in which they were involved.
10. The Advisory Committee agrees with the Commission on the application of the 2006 Guidelines on the method of setting fines imposed pursuant to Article 23(2)(a) of Council Regulation (EC) No 1/2003 ⁽¹⁾.
11. The Advisory Committee agrees with the Commission on the basic amounts of the fines.
12. The Advisory Committee agrees with the determination of the duration for the purpose of calculating the fines.
13. The Advisory Committee agrees with the Commission that there are no aggravating and no mitigating circumstances applicable in this case.
14. The Advisory Committee agrees with the Commission as regards the reduction of the fines based on the 2006 Leniency Notice.
15. The Advisory Committee agrees with the Commission as regards the reduction of the fines based on the 2008 Settlement Notice.
16. The Advisory Committee agrees with the Commission on the final amounts of the fines.
17. The Advisory Committee recommends the publication of its Opinion in the *Official Journal of the European Union*.

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 1, 4.1.2003, p. 1.

Final Report of the Hearing Officer ⁽¹⁾
Occupant Safety Systems supplied to Japanese Car Manufacturers
(Case AT.39881)
(2018/C 135/04)

On 4 April 2016, the Commission initiated proceedings pursuant to Article 11(6) of Council Regulation (EC) No 1/2003 ⁽²⁾ and Article 2(1) of Commission Regulation (EC) No 773/2004 ⁽³⁾ against Tokai Rika ⁽⁴⁾, Takata ⁽⁵⁾, Autoliv ⁽⁶⁾, Toyota Gosei ⁽⁷⁾ and Marutaka ⁽⁸⁾ (collectively 'the parties').

Following settlement discussions ⁽⁹⁾ and settlement submissions ⁽¹⁰⁾ in accordance with Article 10a(2) of Regulation (EC) No 773/2004, the Commission notified a Statement of Objections ('SO') on 26 September 2017. According to the SO, the parties participated in one or more of four single and continuous infringements of Article 101 of the TFEU and Article 53 of the EEA Agreement in respect of their supplies of certain occupant safety systems (OSS) products for passenger cars to Japanese car manufacturers.

In their respective replies to the SO the parties confirmed pursuant to Article 10a(3) of Regulation (EC) No 773/2004 that the SO reflected the contents of their settlement submissions.

The Commission's draft decision finds that the parties infringed Article 101 of the TFEU and Article 53 of the EEA Agreement by participating in one or more of four single and continuous infringements consisting of price coordination and market sharing in respect of supplies of certain types of OSS products (namely seatbelts, airbags and/or steering wheels) for passenger cars between July 2004 and July 2010 to a number of Japanese car manufacturers active in the EEA.

Pursuant to Article 16 of Decision 2011/695/EU, I have examined whether the draft decision deals only with objections in respect of which the parties have been afforded the opportunity of making known their views. I conclude that it does so.

In view of the above, and taking into account that the parties have not addressed any requests or complaints to me ⁽¹¹⁾, I consider that the effective exercise of the procedural rights of the parties to the proceedings in this case has been respected.

Brussels, 21 November 2017.

Joos STRAGIER

⁽¹⁾ Pursuant to Articles 16 and 17 of Decision 2011/695/EU of the President of the European Commission of 13 October 2011 on the function and terms of reference of the hearing officer in certain competition proceedings (OJ L 275, 20.10.2011, p. 29).

⁽²⁾ Council Regulation (EC) No 1/2003 of 16 December 2002 on the implementation of the rules on competition laid down in Articles 81 and 82 of the Treaty (OJ L 1, 4.1.2003, p. 1).

⁽³⁾ Commission Regulation (EC) No 773/2004 of 7 April 2004 relating to the conduct of proceedings by the Commission pursuant to Articles 81 and 82 of the EC Treaty (OJ L 123, 27.4.2004, p. 18).

⁽⁴⁾ Tokai Rika Co., Ltd.

⁽⁵⁾ Takata Corporation.

⁽⁶⁾ Autoliv Inc. and Autoliv Japan Ltd.

⁽⁷⁾ Toyota Gosei Co., Ltd.

⁽⁸⁾ Marutaka Co., Ltd.

⁽⁹⁾ The settlement meetings took place between July 2016 and May 2017.

⁽¹⁰⁾ The parties' requests to settle were submitted [...].

⁽¹¹⁾ Under Article 15(2) of Decision 2011/695/EU, parties to the proceedings in cartel cases which engage in settlement discussions pursuant to Article 10a of Regulation (EC) No 773/2004, may call upon the hearing officer at any stage during the settlement procedure in order to ensure the effective exercise of their procedural rights. See also paragraph 18 of Commission Notice 2008/C 167/01 on the conduct of settlement procedures in view of the adoption of Decisions pursuant to Article 7 and Article 23 of Council Regulation (EC) No 1/2003 in cartel cases (OJ C 167, 2.7.2008, p. 1).

Summary of Commission Decision
of 22 November 2017
relating to proceedings under Article 101 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union
and Article 53 of the EEA Agreement

(Case AT.39881 — Occupant Safety Systems supplied to Japanese Car Manufacturers)

(notified under document number C(2017) 7670)

(Only the English text is authentic)

(2018/C 135/05)

On 22 November 2017, the Commission adopted a decision relating to proceedings under Article 101 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union and Article 53 of the EEA Agreement. In accordance with the provisions of Article 30 of Council Regulation (EC) No 1/2003 ⁽¹⁾, the Commission herewith publishes the names of the parties and the main content of the decision, including any penalties imposed, having regard to the legitimate interest of undertakings in the protection of their business secrets.

1. INTRODUCTION

- (1) On 22 November 2017, the Commission adopted a Decision relating to four single and continuous infringements of Article 101 of the Treaty and Article 53 of the EEA Agreement. The infringements consisted of price coordination and market sharing in respect of sales of occupant safety systems for passenger cars to a number of Japanese car manufacturers active in the EEA.
- (2) The products concerned by these infringements are passive safety systems such as seatbelts, airbags and steering wheels. These are key devices designed to increase the protection of occupants of a vehicle in case of collision.
- (3) This Decision is addressed to Tokai Rika ⁽²⁾, Takata ⁽³⁾, Autoliv ⁽⁴⁾, Toyota Gosei ⁽⁵⁾ and Marutaka ⁽⁶⁾ (the 'Parties').

2. CASE DESCRIPTION

2.1. Procedure

- (4) Following the immunity applications under the terms of the 2006 Leniency Notice, of Tokai Rika, in February 2011, in respect of a cartel in the supply of seatbelts to Toyota and of Takata, in March 2011, in respect of infringements regarding the supply of seatbelts, airbags and steering wheels to various car manufacturers, including Toyota and Suzuki, in June 2011 the Commission carried out unannounced inspections under Article 20(4) of Regulation (EC) No 1/2003 at the premises of Autoliv in Germany. On 4 July 2011, Autoliv submitted a leniency application. On 12 November 2013, Toyota Gosei submitted a leniency application.
- (5) On 4 April 2016, the Commission initiated proceedings pursuant to Article 11(6) of Regulation (EC) No 1/2003 against the Parties with a view to engaging in settlement discussions with them.
- (6) On 26 September 2017, the Commission adopted a statement of objections addressed to the Parties. All of the Parties replied to the statement of objections by confirming that it reflected the contents of their settlement submissions and that they remained committed to following the settlement procedure.
- (7) The Advisory Committee on Restrictive Practices and Dominant Positions issued a favourable opinion on 20 November 2017.
- (8) The Commission adopted this Decision on 22 November 2017.

2.2. Summary of the Infringements

- (9) The four separate infringements all concern the supply of occupant safety systems components for passenger cars in the EEA. The scope of the infringements is as follows:

Infringement I: Coordination between Tokai Rika, Takata, Autoliv and Marutaka concerning certain supplies of seatbelts to Toyota.

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 1, 4.1.2003, p. 1. Regulation as amended by Regulation (EC) No 411/2004 (OJ L 68, 6.3.2004, p. 1).

⁽²⁾ The relevant legal entity is Tokai Rika Co., Ltd.

⁽³⁾ The relevant legal entity is Takata Corporation.

⁽⁴⁾ The relevant legal entities are Autoliv, Inc. and Autoliv Japan Ltd.

⁽⁵⁾ The relevant legal entity is Toyota Gosei Co., Ltd.

⁽⁶⁾ The relevant legal entity is Marutaka Co., Ltd.

Infringement II: Coordination between Takata, Toyoda Gosei and Autoliv concerning certain supplies of airbags to Toyota.

Infringement III: Coordination between Takata and Tokai Rika concerning certain supplies of seatbelts to Suzuki.

Infringement IV: Coordination between Takata and Autoliv concerning certain supplies of seatbelts, airbags and steering wheels to Honda.

2.2.1. *Infringement I*

- (10) Tokai Rika, Takata and Autoliv colluded on prices and the allocation of supply of seatbelts to Toyota. The discussions covered the maintenance of commercial rights, collusion on certain requests for quotation (RFQs), exchanges of commercially sensitive information and coordination on Toyota's periodical requests for price reviews/cost reductions, and inquiries related to raw material cost increases. The contacts took place via email exchanges, face-to-face meetings or phone meetings.
- (11) Marutaka was present at and facilitated meetings between Takata and Tokai Rika and it was in contact with both Tokai Rika and Autoliv on behalf of Takata in order to exchange competitively sensitive information and organise meetings.

2.2.2. *Infringement II*

- (12) Takata, Toyoda Gosei and Autoliv colluded on sales of airbags to Toyota. The discussions covered the maintenance of commercial rights, coordination on certain RFQs, exchanges of commercially sensitive information and coordination on Toyota's periodical requests for price reviews/cost reductions. The contacts took the form of email exchanges, telephone calls and meetings, and occurred most often on a bilateral basis and on occasion, the contacts involved all three competitors.

2.2.3. *Infringement III*

- (13) Takata and Tokai Rika colluded on sales of seatbelts to Suzuki. The collusion covered the maintenance of commercial rights, the coordination on certain RFQs, exchanges of commercially sensitive information and coordination on periodical requests for price reviews. The contacts took place via email exchanges, face-to-face meetings or phone meetings.

2.2.4. *Infringement IV*

- (14) Takata and Autoliv colluded with respect to sales of seatbelts, airbags and steering wheels to Honda. The discussions covered project allocation (respecting 'incumbent's rights'), exchanges of pricing information, exchanges of (and in some cases, coordination on) prices for raw materials and exchanges of commercially sensitive information on cost reductions. The contacts took place via email exchanges, face-to-face meetings or phone meetings.

2.3. **Duration**

- (15) The duration of the participation of each party in the infringements was as follows:

Table

Infringement	Undertaking	Start	End
I	Tokai rika	6.7.2004	11.2.2010
	Takata	6.7.2004	25.3.2010
	Autoliv	18.12.2006	25.3.2010
	Marutaka	6.7.2004	15.4.2009
II	Takata	14.6.2005	26.7.2010
	Autoliv	18.7.2006	26.7.2010
	Toyoda Gosei	14.6.2005	15.7.2009
III	Takata, Tokai Rika	14.2.2008	18.3.2010
IV	Takata, Autoliv	28.3.2006	22.5.2010

2.4. Addressees

2.4.1. Tokai Rika

- (16) Liability for Infringements I and III is imputed to Tokai Rika Co., Ltd.

2.4.2. Takata

- (17) Liability for Infringements I, II, III and IV is imputed to Takata Corporation.

2.4.3. Autoliv

- (18) Liability for Infringements I, II and IV is imputed jointly and severally to Autoliv Japan Ltd as the direct acting entity and Autoliv, Inc. as the parent company.

2.4.4. Toyota Gosei

- (19) Liability for Infringement II is imputed to Toyota Gosei Co., Ltd.

2.4.5. Marutaka

- (20) Liability for Infringement I is imputed to Marutaka Co., Ltd.

2.5. Remedies

- (21) The Decision applies the 2006 Guidelines on fines ⁽¹⁾.

2.5.1. Basic amount of the fine

- (22) In Infringement I, the value of sales is calculated on the basis of the yearly average of sales of seatbelts in the EEA destined for Toyota vehicles during the infringement period. Marutaka does not have any EEA sales, as it is active as TAKATA's distributor in Japan only. Considering its role as facilitator in this infringement, Marutaka's value of sales was estimated on the basis of (i) the other Parties' value of sales in the EEA of seatbelts destined for Toyota vehicles; and (ii) their global turnover. The result was then reduced, in consideration of Marutaka's more limited role as a facilitator.
- (23) In Infringement II, the value of sales is calculated on the basis of the yearly average of sales of airbags in the EEA destined for Toyota vehicles during the infringement period.
- (24) In Infringement III, the value of sales is calculated on the basis of the yearly average of sales of seatbelts in the EEA destined for Suzuki vehicles during the infringement period.
- (25) In Infringement IV, the value of sales is calculated on the basis of the sales of seatbelts, airbags and steering wheels in the EEA destined for Honda vehicles during the infringement period.
- (26) Considering the nature of the infringements and their geographic scope, the percentage for the variable amount of the fines as well as the additional amount ('entry fee') is set at 17 % of the value of sales for the infringements.
- (27) The variable amount is multiplied by the number of years or by fractions of the year respectively of the Parties' individual participation in the infringement(s). The increase for duration is calculated on the basis of days.

2.5.2. Adjustments to the basic amount

- (28) There are no aggravating or mitigating circumstances in this case.
- (29) There is no need to adjust the basic amount of the fine for the purposes of deterrence in this decision.

2.5.3. Application of the 10 % of turnover limit

- (30) None of the fines calculated exceed 10 % of the respective undertaking's total turnover in 2016.

⁽¹⁾ OJ C 210, 1.9.2006, p. 2.

2.5.4. *Application of the Leniency Notice: reduction of fines*

- (31) Tokai Rika was the first to submit information and evidence meeting the conditions of point 8(a) of the 2006 Leniency Notice in Infringement I. Tokai Rika is thus granted immunity from fines for Infringement I.
- (32) Moreover, Tokai Rika was the first undertaking to meet the requirements of points 24 and 25 of the 2006 Leniency Notice as regards Infringement III. Tokai Rika is therefore granted a reduction of 46 % of the fine for Infringement III.
- (33) Takata was the first to submit information and evidence meeting the conditions of point 8(a) of the 2006 Leniency Notice in Infringements II, III and IV. Takata is thus granted immunity from fines for Infringements II, III and IV.
- (34) Moreover, Takata was the first undertaking to meet the requirements of points 24 and 25 of the 2006 Leniency Notice as regards Infringement I. Takata is therefore granted a reduction of 50 % of the fine for Infringement I.
- (35) Autoliv was the first undertaking to meet the requirements of points 24 and 25 of the 2006 Leniency Notice as regards Infringements II and IV and the second undertaking to meet the requirements of points 24 and 25 of the Leniency Notice as regards Infringement I. Autoliv is therefore granted a reduction of the fine of 30 % for Infringement I and of 50 % for Infringements II and IV.
- (36) Autoliv was the first party to submit compelling evidence in the sense of point 25 of the 2006 Leniency Notice that enabled the Commission to extend the duration of Infringements I, II and IV. In accordance with point 26 of the 2006 Leniency Notice, the mentioned durations are not taken into account when setting the fine for Autoliv for Infringements I, II and IV.
- (37) Toyoda Gosei was the second undertaking to meet the requirements of points 24 and 25 of the Leniency Notice as regards Infringement II. Toyoda Gosei is therefore granted a reduction of 28 % of the fine for Infringement II.
- (38) Toyoda Gosei was the first party to submit compelling evidence in the sense of point 25 of the 2006 Leniency Notice that enabled the Commission to extend the duration of Infringement II. In accordance with point 26 of the 2006 Leniency Notice, the Commission will not take the mentioned duration into account when setting the fine for Toyoda Gosei for Infringement II.

2.5.5. *Application of the Settlement Notice*

- (39) As a result of the application of the Settlement Notice, the amount of the fines to be imposed on each Party was reduced by 10 %. The reduction was added to their leniency reward.

3. CONCLUSION

- (40) The following fines were imposed pursuant to Article 23(2) of Regulation (EC) No 1/2003:

For Infringement I:

- (a) on Tokai Rika Co., Ltd: EUR 0;
- (b) on Takata Corporation: EUR 12 724 000;
- (c) on Autoliv, Inc. and Autoliv Japan Ltd, jointly and severally: EUR 265 000;
- (d) on Marutaka Co., Ltd: EUR 156 000.

For Infringement II:

- (a) on Takata Corporation: EUR 0;
- (b) on Autoliv, Inc. and Autoliv Japan Ltd, jointly and severally: EUR 4 957 000;
- (c) on Toyoda Gosei Co., Ltd: EUR 11 262 000.

For Infringement III:

- (a) on Takata Corporation: EUR 0;
- (b) on Tokai Rika Co., Ltd: EUR 1 818 000.

For Infringement IV:

- (a) on Takata Corporation: EUR 0;
 - (b) on Autoliv, Inc. and Autoliv Japan Ltd, jointly and severally: EUR 2 829 000.
-

V

*(Announcements)*PROCEDURES RELATING TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF COMPETITION
POLICY

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

**Notice to economic operators — New round of requests for the suspension of the autonomous
Common Customs Tariff duties on certain industrial and agricultural products**

(2018/C 135/06)

Economic operators are informed that the Commission has received requests in accordance with the administrative arrangements foreseen in the Commission Communication concerning autonomous tariff suspensions and quotas (2011/C 363/02) ⁽¹⁾ for the January round of 2019.

The list of the products for which a duty suspension is requested is now available on the Commission's thematic (Europa) website on the customs union ⁽²⁾.

Economic operators are also informed that the deadline for objections against new requests to reach the Commission, via the national administrations, is 15 June 2018 which is the date of the second scheduled meeting of the Economic Tariff Questions Group.

Interested operators are advised to consult the list regularly in order to be informed on the status of the requests.

More information on the autonomous tariff suspension procedure can be found on the Europa website:

http://ec.europa.eu/taxation_customs/customs/customs_duties/tariff_aspects/suspensions/index_en.htm

⁽¹⁾ OJ C 363, 13.12.2011, p. 6.

⁽²⁾ http://ec.europa.eu/taxation_customs/dds2/susp/susp_home.jsp?Lang=en

OTHER ACTS

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Publication of an amendment application pursuant to Article 50(2)(a) of Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council on quality schemes for agricultural products and foodstuffs

(2018/C 135/07)

This publication confers the right to oppose the application pursuant to Article 51 of Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council ⁽¹⁾.

APPLICATION FOR APPROVAL OF NON-MINOR AMENDMENTS TO THE PRODUCT SPECIFICATION FOR A PROTECTED DESIGNATION OF ORIGIN OR PROTECTED GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATION

Application for approval of amendments in accordance with the first subparagraph of Article 53(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012**'BLEU DES CAUSSES'****EU No: PDO-FR-0108-AM02 — 31.3.2017****PDO (X) PGI ()****1. Applicant group and legitimate interest**

Syndicat du Bleu des Causses
BP 9 12004 Rodez Cedex
FRANCE

Tel. +33 565765353
Fax +33 565765300
Email: helene.salinier@lactalis.fr

The applicant group for 'Bleu des Causses' is composed of 'Bleu des Causses' PDO operators (producers, collectors, processors and ripeners) and has a legitimate interest in submitting the application.

2. Member State or Third Country

France

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

- ☐ Name of product
- ☒ Description of product
- ☒ Geographical area
- ☒ Proof of origin
- ☒ Method of production
- ☐ Link
- ☒ Labelling
- ☒ Other: inspection, link, inspection bodies

4. Type of amendment(s)

- ☒ Amendments to the product specification of a registered PDO or PGI not to be qualified as minor within the meaning of the third subparagraph of Article 53(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012
- ☐ Amendments to the product specification of a registered PDO or PGI for which a Single Document (or equivalent) has not been published and which cannot be qualified as minor within the meaning of the third subparagraph of Article 53(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 343, 14.12.2012, p. 1.

5. Amendment(s)

Heading ‘Description of product’

The description of the product has been supplemented to make it more precise:

- the words ‘cow’s milk cheese’ have been replaced by the words ‘cheese made exclusively from cow’s milk’ so as to avoid any ambiguity,
- the word ‘renneted’ has been added with reference to the manufacturing method,
- the words ‘fermented and salted’ have been added to describe the paste.

The minimum fat content of the cheese after total desiccation has been increased to 50 grams of fat per 100 grams of cheese after total desiccation (or 50 %) instead of 45 % as a result of the larger share of fat in the milk and the use of whole milk to make ‘Bleu des Causses’. It has been regularly found that the fat content of ‘Bleu des Causses’ after total desiccation exceeds 50 %.

Therefore the sentences “Bleu des Causses” is an unpressed, uncooked, fermented and salted blue-veined cheese made exclusively from renneted, non-skimmed cow’s milk. It has a minimum fat content of 50 grams per 100 grams of cheese after total desiccation and its dry matter content must not be less than 53 grams for 100 grams of cheese.’ replace the following sentence in the current specification ‘Bleu des Causses is an unpressed, uncooked blue-veined cheese made from non-skimmed cow’s milk, with a fat content of 45 % in the dry matter, the latter being at least 53 grams per 100 grams of cheese.’.

The diameter of the cheese ranges between 19 and 21 centimetres. These more precise figures replace the words ‘approximately 20 centimetres’. The maximum height has been increased by two centimetres to reach a height of 12 centimetres (instead of 10), and the weight range has been expanded slightly: it has been set between 2,2 and 3,3 kilograms instead of 2,3 and 3 kilograms. These figures reflect more accurately the actual sizes of the cheeses. Finally, it has been added that the cheese is ‘regular in shape’ in order to prevent defects in the shape of the cheeses.

A description of the taste, paste and texture has been added: ‘The paste is ivory-white, uniform in colour, smooth, fine, with evenly distributed blue-green marbling and possible needlehole traces. It has a smooth and tender texture. The taste is clean, flavoursome, with aromas characteristic of blue cheese; it may have a slight bitterness without excessive pungency or too much salt’. This description is useful for the organoleptic examination of the product during inspection.

The sentence ‘The designation of origin “Bleu des Causses” may not be used until the 70th day after renneting’ has been added to replace the sentence ‘The total ripening period varies from 70 to 130 days, depending on the cheesemakers and ripeners’ under the ‘Method of production’ section of the current specification. No change has been made to the minimum age required to qualify for the PDO. It has now been specified that the age is calculated from the renneting date. The maximum ripening period of 130 days, which was indicative, has been deleted.

It has been specified that ‘The cutting of “Bleu des Causses” is authorised if it does not alter the cheese’s texture. “Bleu des Causses” may be presented in pieces that have been cut mechanically’. Given the continuous changes in the ways cheese is consumed, this provision establishes a framework preventing deviations as regards the type of cut.

Heading ‘Definition of the geographical area’

The paragraphs ‘The production area covers the Causses region, in other words, a part of the department of Aveyron and of the neighbouring departments of Lot, Lozère, Gard and Hérault having the character of limestone plateaux (“causses”) and ‘The cheese is ripened in cellars in the Causses in the geographical area delimited by the cantons of Campagnac, Cornus, Millau, Peyreleau and Saint-Affrique (Aveyron) and the municipalities of Trèves (Gard) and Pégairolles-de-l’Escalette (Hérault)’ in the specification and the related paragraphs of the published summary have been deleted and replaced by the paragraphs ‘The milk is produced and “Bleu des Causses” cheeses made, ripened and matured in the geographical area, which forms a mosaic of terrains issued from magmatic, metamorphic or calcareous rocks. Limestone plateaux are characteristic features of this landscape. They are particular in that they occasionally provide natural cellars having fractures that naturally regulate the humidity and ventilation of the cellar. These cavities are particularly suited to the ripening of “Bleu des Causses”, which has been carried out in the area for a long time’ and ‘The geographical area of the designation of origin “Bleu des Causses” covers practically all of the department of Aveyron and part of the departments of Lot, Lozère, Gard and Hérault’, which are more precise and make it possible to present concisely the geographical area, of which the limestone plateaux are characteristic features. No changes have been made to the boundaries of the geographical area.

In order to describe the geographical area precisely and without ambiguity, the municipalities that compose it have been listed in the specification. That description reproduces the one referred to more concisely in the published summary. The drafting work identified an omission in the description of the geographical area in the current specification. Five municipalities of the department of Aveyron were missing, although they are located in the heart of the geographical area: Druelle-Balsac, Luc-la-Primaube, Le Monastère, Olemps and Sainte-Radegonde. These municipalities have been added to the specification. This is a correction of a material error that does not call into question the link between the product and its geographical origin.

Heading ‘Evidence that the product originates from the geographical area’

Reporting obligations

An identification declaration for operators has been provided for to replace the declaration of suitability. Identifying the operators is a prerequisite for their accreditation, which recognises that they are able to meet the requirements of the specification for the designation from which they wish to benefit.

Prior declarations of having no intention to produce and of resuming production have also been added, enabling close monitoring of operators who wish to withdraw for a short period from the designation of origin. This makes it easier to manage the designation of origin, in particular as regards production checks and organoleptic tests.

The content and the means of submission of the declarations necessary for recognition and monitoring of the products to be marketed with the designation of origin have been added. They enable the group to monitor the designation.

Registries

The list of the registrations which operators must carry out has been added so as to facilitate checks on traceability and the production conditions laid down by the specification.

Heading ‘Method of obtaining the product’

Milk production

A definition of the dairy herd has been added, as follows: ‘all the dairy cows and replacement heifers present on the holding’, it being noted that ‘the dairy cows are the lactating animals and the animals which have run dry’ and ‘the heifers are the animals which have been weaned but have not yet given birth’. The purpose of this definition is to avoid any confusion and facilitate checks by making clear which animals are being referred to when the terms ‘dairy herd’, ‘dairy cows’ and ‘heifers’ are used subsequently in the specification.

As the current specification contains no provisions on the origin of the dairy cows’ feed, a provision whereby ‘at least 80 % in dry matter of the dairy cows’ basic ration comes from the geographical area on average for all the dairy cows over the year’ has been added in order to strengthen the link with the geographical area. The threshold of 80 % has been set owing to the climatic characteristics of the geographical area of ‘Bleu des Causses’ (drying, easily prone to droughts).

The composition of the dairy cows’ basic ration has been added. It comprises ‘all fodder except cruciferous plants in the form of green fodder’. Cruciferous plants are forbidden because of their negative effect on the milk’s organoleptic characteristics (taste of cabbage).

It has also been added that ‘outside the grazing period the dairy cows are given at least 3 kg of hay, expressed as dry matter, per cow per day’. That provision has been complemented with the sentence ‘Hay means mowed and dried grass with a dry matter content of at least 80 %’. That definition is useful for the purpose of inspections.

A minimum grazing period of 120 days a year has been introduced for lactating dairy cows, supplemented by a provision for a minimum pasture area of 30 acres per cow on average for the grazing season. It has also been added that ‘the animals have access to the pastures’. These conditions aim at reinforcing the role of grazing in the feeding of the dairy cows and thereby strengthening the link with the geographical area.

More detailed rules on the feeding of the heifers and dry cows have been introduced, as follows: 'The heifers and dry cows are present on the holding at least a month before they start to lactate and are, from then on, given feed that complies with the provisions of the specification for lactating dairy cows' feed'. In other words, these animals are subject to an adjustment period of at least 1 month before their milk is used for the production of 'Bleu des Causses'.

A ban on the off-land rearing of dairy cows has been introduced to guarantee the link to the territory through the animals' feed.

A provision has been added to limit the amount of supplementary feed and additives to 1 800 kg of dry matter per dairy cow per year on average for all the dairy cows, so as to prevent this feed from becoming too dominant in the diet. Furthermore, a positive list has been drawn up of the raw materials authorised in the supplementary feed distributed to the dairy cows and of the authorised additives, as these lists are necessary to better manage, guarantee and monitor the feeding.

A provision banning GMOs in holdings' feed and crops has been added in order to maintain the feed's traditional character.

Milk used

The following provisions have been introduced: 'After milking, the milk is stored in refrigerated tanks' and 'Storage on the farm may not exceed 48 hours following the first milking'. These clarifications aim at limiting the deterioration of the milk.

It has been added that 'The unloading of vehicle tanks into stationary tanks must take place in the geographical area covered by the designation'. The provision is designed to guarantee the traceability of the milk collected and facilitate inspection.

Since the current specification does not contain a provision on the issue, it has been supplemented by adding the sentence 'the milk used for making "Bleu des Causses" may be raw or heat-treated'. Furthermore, the description of the product, 'Bleu des Causses is a cheese made exclusively from non-skimmed cow's milk', has been supplemented by adding that 'the cheese is made using unhomogenised whole milk that is non-standardised in terms of fat content and protein content'. That corresponds to the practices that have been in place for many years when processing milk used to produce 'Bleu des Causses'.

Manufacturing

A maximum period of 36 hours between the receipt of the milk at the processing plant and renneting has been introduced in order to prevent the deterioration of the raw material.

For the sake of precision, the renneting temperature has been raised slightly and set between 31 °C and 35 °C to replace the terms 'approximately 30 °C'. The renneting temperature greatly affects the activity of the rennet, and adjusting the temperature within the range '31 °C-35 °C', in accordance with the usual values, is an important parameter for managing production.

It has been specified that renneting must be carried out 'using rennet only', which replaces the sentences 'Coagulation is caused by rennet' and 'The renneting of the milk must be carried out using rennet only'. This is a formal amendment, and the reference to the traditional method of coagulating milk with rennet has been kept.

The words 'proven to be harmless in use' have been added after the words 'innocuous bacterial, yeast and mould cultures' in order to clarify the meaning.

The cutting and stirring of the curd after coagulation have been described in greater detail, in place of the sentence 'The curd is cut into cubes, then stirred and left to rest':

- The size of the curd grain after cutting, from 1 to 3 centimetres, has been added.
- The need to obtain a 'styled' curd grain has been introduced, this being important later when forming openings in the cheese: 'styled' curd grains remain separate during moulding.

- A reference has been added to a draining phase carried out in a vat and/or on a draining mat before placing in the mould. This step makes it possible to remove some of the whey prior to moulding without crushing the curd grains.

The sentence 'The curd-whey mixture is moulded and drained over a period of 2-4 days and turned several times a day' has been replaced by the following, more detailed, provisions:

- 'The curd-whey mixture is moulded. It may be stirred and mixed when being placed in the mould': the purpose of these operations is to resuspend the curd grains.
- 'Moulding begins not earlier than 1 hour 30 minutes and not later than 3 hours after renneting'. That provision sets out the limits beyond which the interval between renneting and moulding is no longer optimal for the production of 'Bleu des Causses'.
- 'This is followed by natural draining without pressing. The cheeses are turned regularly to reach the right degree of draining, and this is done in a room where the temperature ranges between 15 °C and 22 °C and over a period of 36 to 72 hours from the start of moulding'. These more precise provisions correspond to production practices. Setting values for the temperature and for the duration of draining is important so as to manage the acidification process of 'Bleu des Causses', which affects the selection of the cheese's flora.

The provision 'The temperature of the cheeses in moulds is then adjusted for salting over a period of 15 to 30 hours, in a room where the temperature ranges between 7 °C and 14 °C' has been added. During this temperature adjustment phase, the temperature of the cheeses is lowered gradually to prepare for the transition between draining and salting.

The sentence 'After removal from the mould, the cheese is salted with coarse salt' has been replaced with the paragraph 'After removal from the mould, salting using salt takes place in a room with a temperature between 7 °C and 14 °C. It is carried out either manually or mechanically by adding salt to the surface of the cheese in two steps: salting of one side and the heel, then salting of the other side and again of the heel. Brining is prohibited'. The salting method and temperature are thereby specified. Owing to its role in the selection of the flora, salting is indispensable for the development of *Penicillium roqueforti* in 'Bleu des Causses'. Furthermore, since both coarse salt and fine salt may be used without it making any particular difference to the product, the reference to the use of 'coarse' salt has been removed. The brining ban has been mentioned specifically.

The provisions 'Pricking takes place in cellars or at cheese dairies between the 5th and 12th day following renneting in order to make outlets for air in the cheese. The period between the pricking and the cheeses being placed in the cellar may not exceed 5 days' have been added and the phrase 'Once they have entered the cellar, the cheeses are pricked to form outlets for air in the cheese' has been removed. These amendments enable the following:

- On the one hand, to better determine the time for pricking, as it does not always take place when the cheese is being placed in the cellar: it may also be carried out at the cheese dairy.
- On the other hand, to determine the period between renneting and pricking in order to better describe the cheese-making process.
- Finally, to specify the maximum period between the pricking and the cheeses being placed in the cellar. As the pricking lets oxygen penetrate the paste, it is important that the cheeses be placed in the cellar within not more than 5 days so as to allow the development of *Penicillium roqueforti* in the best possible conditions.

Ripening and maturation

Since removing the surface salt before the cheeses are sent to the cellar is not always necessary, it has been added that this step is 'optional'.

The words 'natural ripening cellars located in the defined area' have been replaced by the words 'natural cellars in the limestone plateaux through which cool and humid air currents flow naturally from natural limestone fractures called "fleurines"' in order to provide a detailed description of the natural cellars by highlighting the specific ventilation system created by natural fractures called 'fleurines'. The reference to the location of the cellars in the defined area has been deleted, because the steps taking place in the geographical area have already been specified in the chapter 'Definition of the geographical area'.

The provision specifying that the cheeses are placed on racks has been removed, since the cheeses can be placed in various ways in the cellar without it affecting the product.

The sentence 'Then the cheeses undergo aerobic ripening for around 10 days at a temperature of 8 °C to 13 °C, depending on the season' has been replaced by the sentence 'In order to enable the good development of *Penicillium roqueforti*, the unpacked cheeses undergo an aerobic ripening in these natural cellars over a minimum period of 12 days from the date they are placed in the cellar':

- Thus it has been specified that the cheeses are not in a package while they are ripening in natural cellars, as this is important for the development of *Penicillium roqueforti*.
- The expression 'around ten days', which is not sufficiently precise, has been replaced by the definition of a minimum duration of 12 days from the date of entering the cellar. This duration corresponds to the practice in the cellar during the warm season (during the cold season, the ripening period in the natural cellar is longer).
- The provision specifying that the temperature of the natural cellar is set between 8 °C and 13 °C has been deleted. This temperature cannot be standardised, because it depends on the natural ventilation guaranteed by the 'fleurines', which varies according to the external climatic conditions.

The sentence 'After this, the "skin" of the cheese is cleaned and the cheeses are packed in a special packaging before being placed in a cold room for anaerobic refining' has been replaced by the sentences 'After this, the cheeses are packed in individual, neutral and temporary packaging ("sealed") before being placed in a refrigerated room for anaerobic maturation. The temperature of that room may not be below – 4 °C or above + 4 °C':

- since it is not always necessary to clean the skin of the cheese prior to packaging, as this has no effect on the characteristics of the cheese, the provision 'the "skin" of the cheese is cleaned' has been deleted,
- the concept of 'special packaging' has been replaced by a more precise description of the packaging, which is individual, neutral (meaning without any markings except those necessary for traceability) and temporary, this packaging operation being called 'sealing',
- the phase of 'ripening in a cold room' is now designated using the more precise technical terms of 'maturation in a refrigerated room', which is anaerobic,
- the temperature range for that maturation phase has been specified (– 4 °C to + 4 °C) in order to better manage the production conditions of 'Bleu des Causses'.

It has been added that 'the cheeses may not leave the maturation room before the 70th day or after the 190th day following the renneting date'. This phrase replaces the phrase 'The total ripening period varies according to the cheesemakers and ripeners. It is from 70 to 130 days', which was less precise. The maximum total ripening period of 130 days has been deleted. It has been replaced by defining a maximum period of 190 days in a refrigerated room, calculated from the renneting date, as this guarantees the organoleptic characteristics of the product.

The ban on conserving fresh cheeses and cheeses undergoing ripening under a modified atmosphere has been extended to cover cheeses undergoing maturation, since conservation under a modified atmosphere is incompatible with the maturation process.

The sentences 'On leaving the cellar, the cheeses are placed in a "resting room" for 4 to 6 days. Their surface is then cleaned, and they are classified using criteria for weight, shape and size, and quality' have been deleted. Depending on the needs of the cheese dairy, it could happen that the steps of placing the cheese in a resting room (in which the cheeses are stored while awaiting packaging after leaving the maturation room), cleaning the surface of the cheese and classifying the cheeses using criteria for weight, format and quality are not always carried out, without this affecting the specificity of the product.

Heading 'Labelling'

The requirement to include the 'INAO' logo on labels has been deleted and replaced by a requirement to include the European Union PDO logo.

In order to clarify the terms that may be next to the name of the designation, the following sentence has been added: 'Irrespective of the regulatory references applicable to all cheeses, the use of any other adjective directly next to the name of the designation is prohibited in labelling, advertising, invoices and commercial documents, with the exception of specific brand names or trademarks and the words "ripened in a natural cellar"'. This has been done, in particular, to allow the possibility of referring to ripening in natural cellars, which is one of the specificities of 'Bleu des Causses'.

Other

Under the subheading 'Product inspection', it has been added that the analytical and organoleptic testing of the product 'is carried out by random sampling on cheeses aged at least 70 days as calculated from the renneting date, using procedures provided for in the inspection plan'. This information is used in the inspection plan for the designation of origin drawn up by the inspection body.

The heading 'Details bearing out the link with the geographical area' has been reworded and divided into three parts in order to better highlight the different elements making up the link with the geographical area. Consequently the part 'specificity of the geographical area' includes the natural factors by referring, in particular, to the erosion of the limestone plateaux that forms the cellars and 'fleurines' as well as the human factors by summarising the historical aspects and underlining the specific know-how of the producers of 'Bleu des Causses' (e.g. adapting cattle rearing to the territory, producing whole milk, stirring the curd grains in a production vat, draining without pressing, pricking, ripening in a natural cellar, anaerobic maturing). The part 'specificity of the product' has been updated with the elements introduced in the description of the product. Finally, the point 'causal link' explains the interactions between the natural and human factors and the product.

In order to update the heading 'References to the inspection body', the name and contact details of the official bodies have been modified.

Finally, a table has been added which sets out the main points to be checked and the relevant evaluation method to be used, in accordance with the national legislation in force.

SINGLE DOCUMENT

'BLEU DES CAUSSES'

EU No: PDO-FR-0108-AM02 — 31.3.2017

PDO (X) PGI ()

1. Name(s)

'Bleu des Causses'

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

'Bleu des Causses' is an unpressed, uncooked, fermented and salted blue-veined cheese made exclusively from renneted, non-skimmed cow's milk. It has a minimum fat content of 50 grams per 100 grams of cheese after total desiccation and its dry matter content must not be less than 53 grams for 100 grams of cheese.

The cheese comes in the form of a flat cylinder that is regular in shape, 19-21 centimetres in diameter, 8-12 centimetres high and weighing 2,2 to 3,3 kilograms.

The surface of the cheese is clean, without excessive smears or spots.

The paste is ivory-white, uniform in colour, smooth, fine, with evenly distributed blue-green marbling and possible needlehole traces. It has a smooth and tender texture.

The taste is clean, flavoursome, with aromas characteristic of blue cheese; it may have a slight bitterness without excessive pungency or too much salt.

The designation of origin 'Bleu des Causses' may not be used until the 70th day after renneting.

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

At least 80 % in dry matter of the dairy cows' basic ration comes from the geographical area on average for all the dairy cows over the year.

The dairy cows' basic ration is composed of all fodder except cruciferous plants in the form of green fodder.

Outside the grazing period the dairy cows are given at least 3 kilograms of hay, expressed as dry matter, per cow per day. Hay means mowed and dried grass with a dry matter content of at least 80 %.

When grass is available, grazing is mandatory for the lactating dairy cows as soon as the weather allows. In any case, the grazing period may not be less than 120 days a year.

The use of supplementary feed and additives is limited to a maximum of 1 800 kg of dry matter per dairy cow per year on average for all the dairy cows.

It is clear from the provisions above that at least 56 % of the dry matter in the total feed ration per year provided to the dairy cows is produced in the geographical area. All of the feed, in particular the supplementary feed, does not necessarily come from the geographical area, because there is little land suitable for crops, and the climatic conditions, with hills that receive much rain and dry limestone plateaux, limit their production.

Only the raw materials and additives specified in a positive list are authorised in the supplementary feed and additives given to the dairy cows.

Only plants, by-products and supplementary feed derived from non-transgenic products are authorised in the animal feed. The planting of transgenic crops is prohibited in all areas of farms producing milk for the production of the 'Bleu des Causses' designation of origin. This prohibition applies to all types of plant likely to be given as feed to animals on the farm and to all crops liable to contaminate such plants.

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

The milk is produced and the cheeses ripened and matured in the geographical area.

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

The cutting of 'Bleu des Causses' is authorised if it does not alter the cheese's texture. 'Bleu des Causses' may be presented in pieces that have been cut mechanically.

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

The labelling for each cheese contains the name of the designation of origin 'Bleu des Causses' in characters at least two-thirds the size of the largest characters on the label.

Irrespective of the regulatory references applicable to all cheeses, the use of any other adjective directly next to the name of the designation is prohibited in labelling, advertising, invoices and commercial documents, with the exception of specific brand names or trademarks and the words 'ripened in a natural cellar'.

4. Concise definition of the geographical area

The geographical area of 'Bleu des Causses' forms a mosaic of terrains issued from magmatic, metamorphic or calcareous rocks. Limestone plateaux are characteristic features of this landscape. They are particular in that they occasionally provide natural cellars having fractures that naturally regulate the humidity and ventilation of the cellar. These cavities are particularly suited to the ripening of 'Bleu des Causses', which has been carried out in the area for a long time.

The geographical area of the designation of origin 'Bleu des Causses' covers practically all of the department of Aveyron and part of the departments of Lot, Lozère, Gard and Hérault. It stretches over the following territory:

Department of Aveyron

The cantons of Aveyron and Tarn, Causse-Comtal, Causses-Rougiers, Ceor-Ségala, Enne and Alzou, Lot and Dourdou, Lot and Montbazinois, Lot and Palanges, Lot and Truyère, Millau-1, Millau-2, Monts du Réquistanais, Nord-Lévezou, Raspes and Lévezou, Rodez-1, Rodez-2, Rodez-Onet, Saint-Affrique, Tarn and Causses, Vallon, Villefranche-de-Rouergue, Villeneuvevois and Villefrancois.

The municipalities of Campouriez, Cassuéjous, Condom-d'Aubrac, Curières, Florentin-la-Capelle, Huparlac, Laguiole, Montézic, Montpeyroux, Saint-Amans-des-Cots, Saint-Chély-d'Aubrac, Saint-Symphorien-de-Thénières, Soulaiges-Bonneval.

Department of Gard

The municipality of Trèves.

Department of Hérault

The municipality of Pégairolles-de-l'Escalette.

Department of Lot

The cantons of Cahors-1, Cahors-2, Cahors-3, Causse and Vallées, Luzech, Marches du Sud-Quercy.

The municipalities of Boissières, Le Boulvé, Boussac, Calamane, Calès, Cambes, Cassagnes, Catus, Cœur-de-Causse, Corn, Crayssac, Duravel, Durbans, Espère, Flaujac-Gare, Floressas, Francoulès, Gignac, Gigouzac, Ginouillac, Grézels, Les Junies, Labastide-du-Vert, Lacapelle-Cabanac, Lachapelle-Auzac, Lagardelle, Lamothe-Cassel, Lamothe-Fénelon, Lanzac, Lherm, Livernon, Loupiac, Mauroux, Maxou, Mechmont, Montamel, Montcabrier, Montfaucon, Montgesty, Nadaillac-de-Rouge, Nuzéjous, Payrac, Pescadoires, Pontcirq, Prayssac, Puy-l'Évêque, Reilhac, Reilhaguet, Le Roc, Saint-Chamarand, Saint-Cirq-Souillaguet, Saint-Denis-Catus, Saint-Martin-le-Redon, Saint-Matré, Saint-Médard, Saint-Pierre-Lafeuille, Saint-Projet, Saux, Séniergues, Sérignac, Soturac, Soucirac, Souillac, Touzac, Ussel, Uzech, Le Vigan, Vire-sur-Lot.

Department of Lozère

The cantons of La Canourgue, Chirac, Saint-Chély-d'Apcher.

The following municipalities in their entirety: Allenc, Antrenas, Aumont-Aubrac, Badaroux, Les Bessons, Brenoux, Le Buisson, Chadenet, Chaulhac, La Chaze-de-Peyre, La Fage-Saint-Julien, Fau-de-Peyre, Fraissinet-de-Fourques, Gatuzières, Hures-la-Parade, Ispagnac, Javols, Julianges, Lanuéjols, Le Malzieu-Forain, Le Malzieu-Ville, Marvejols, Mas-Saint-Chély, Mende, Meyrueis, Montbrun, Les Monts-Verts, Paulhac-en-Margeride, Quézac, Recoules-de-Fumas, Le Rozier, Saint-Bauzile, Saint-Étienne-du-Valdonnez, Saint-Laurent-de-Muret, Saint-Léger-de-Peyre, Saint-Léger-du-Malzieu, Saint-Pierre-de-Nogaret, Saint-Pierre-des-Tripiers, Saint-Privat-du-Fau, Saint-Sauveur-de-Peyre, Sainte-Colombe-de-Peyre, Sainte-Hélène, Vebron.

The following municipalities in part: Cans-et-Cévennes (for the territory of the delegated municipality of Saint-Laurent-de-Trèves), Florac-Trois-Rivières (for the territory of the delegated municipality of Florac).

5. Link with the geographical area

The geographical area of the designation of origin 'Bleu des Causses' is located at the south-east end of the Massif Central. It is delimited by mountain ranges in the north, east and south of the area: the Monts d'Aubrac in the north, the Margeride and Cévennes in the east and the Monts de Lacaune in the south. The western boundary consists of the eastern end of the Aquitaine Basin. Most of the geographical area is mid-mountainous and becomes flatter towards the west as it reaches the Aquitaine Basin. Therefore it presents rather diverse landscapes characterised notably by a succession of rocky, upland limestone plateaux called 'Causses'.

The erosion, which is principally hydraulic, causes karstic cavities to form. A number of 'fleurines' — fractures that let through cold and humid air currents — can be found in these large caverns in the calcareous subsoil of the Causses. The outside air penetrating the subsoil through the numerous surface fractures picks up moisture and cools on contact with the damp walls of the rocks or the ground waters; it becomes denser and has a natural tendency to escape through the lower openings, in other words the 'fleurines' of the cellars. The drier and warmer the outside air, the more active this movement and the lower the cellar's temperature.

The climate results mainly from oceanic and Mediterranean influences. The influence of the mountainous climate of the Massif Central is also felt along the northern edge of the geographical area and on the peaks. The occasionally varied topography and the exposure to winds create contrasts between the hills, subject to higher rainfall, and the drier limestone plateaux. All of the geographical area enjoys plentiful sunshine generally exceeding 2 000 hours a year. The dairy farms are located in generally low and dry parts of the area that have calcareous terrains but also, to a large extent, basement terrains or marly-limestone and sandstone terrains, where it is possible to grow grass and maize.

'Bleu des Causses' has always been made in the region of limestone plateaux extending over the department of Aveyron and the neighbouring departments. The production of 'Bleu des Causses' developed in particular after the adoption of the Law of 26 July 1925, which prohibited the production and ripening of cheeses that were not made from sheep's milk (but from cow's milk, for instance) in the municipality of Roquefort. This encouraged the creation of a sector for blue cheese made from cow's milk in the geographical area. First called 'Bleu de l'Aveyron', this cheese was defined by decree in 1945. It was recognised as a controlled designation of origin called 'Bleu des Causses' by decree on 21 May 1979.

In a region where sheep predominate, cattle rearing was maintained by relying on fodder crops that are adapted to the terrains and climate of the geographical area and constitute 80 % of the dairy cows' basic ration.

Nowadays the making of 'Bleu des Causses' calls for specific know-how. The milk is used whole, without homogenisation. After being cut, the curd grains are stirred in a production vat in order to style them, in other words cover them with a thin film that prevents the grains from sticking together during moulding. Once it is in the mould, the cheese is drained naturally, without pressing, as this keeps the grains separate from one another. The pricking of the cheese with a bundle of needles before refining it in a natural cellar forms outlets for air in the cheese, which let oxygen penetrate the paste.

The cheese is then made to ripen in a humid natural cellar ventilated through natural 'fleurines', and this enables the development of *Penicillium roqueforti*. Once this mould has grown well, the cheese is 'sealed', meaning that it is wrapped in individual packaging for the anaerobic maturation phase.

'Bleu des Causses' is a whole cow's milk cheese with an ivory-white paste that is uniform in colour and has evenly distributed blue-green marbling. It has a smooth and tender texture.

The taste is clean, flavoursome, with aromas characteristic of blue cheese; it may have a slight bitterness without excessive pungency or too much salt.

The recognition of 'Bleu des Causses', a blue cheese made from cow's milk, is based on the organisation of a group of people who wanted to enhance the value of cow's milk production in a region dominated by sheep production, in response to the strict rules regulating the production of Roquefort, a blue cheese made from sheep's milk.

The production of 'Bleu des Causses' is based on know-how acquired in the geographical area resulting in a cheese that has an ivory-white paste with an evenly distributed marbling. Using unhomogenised whole milk contributes to the colour of the paste. The styling of the curd grains in a vat, the natural draining without pressing and the pricking create regular openings in the paste of the cheese in which *Penicillium roqueforti* develops during ripening. This makes it possible to obtain an evenly distributed marbling.

The ripening of 'Bleu des Causses' is closely linked to the geographical area, which consists of limestone plateaux where there are cellars with natural 'fleurines' linked to the geological formation of the soil. The 'fleurines' — fractures that have formed naturally over time in the typical calcareous soil of the Causses — let in air currents, which then settle between the surface of the plateaux and the cellars in the subsoil, bringing freshness and humidity. Those air currents help create a favourable environment for the development of *Penicillium roqueforti* inside the cheese. That mould is behind the blue-green marbling of 'Bleu des Causses'.

The anaerobic maturation following the ripening in a natural cellar slows down the development of *Penicillium roqueforti* while allowing the enzymatic action to continue (proteolysis and lipolysis). It is during that phase that the cheese acquires its smooth and tender texture and characteristic aromas of blue cheese and its bitterness is replaced by a clean and flavoursome taste.

In other words, the action of the *Penicillium roqueforti* mould during the ripening in a natural cellar and maturation contribute greatly to the principal organoleptic characteristics of 'Bleu des Causses'.

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-4a26bad1-2827-4edb-b58e-b06c876f6781/telechargement

