

**Publication of an application for registration pursuant to Article 6(2) of Council Regulation (EEC) No 2081/92 on the protection of geographical indications and designations of origin**

(2001/C 354/05)

This publication confers the right to object to the application pursuant to Article 7 of the abovementioned Regulation. Any objection to this application must be submitted via the competent authority in the Member State concerned within a time limit of six months from the date of this publication. The arguments for publication are set out below, in particular under 4.6, and are considered to justify the application within the meaning of Regulation (EEC) No 2081/92.

COUNCIL REGULATION (EEC) No 2081/92

APPLICATION FOR REGISTRATION: ARTICLE 5

PDO (x) PGI ( )

National application No: —

**1. Responsible department in the Member State**

Name: Institut national des appellations d'origine

Address: 138, Champs-Élysées, F-75008 Paris

Tel.: (33) 153 89 80 00

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**2. Applicant group**

2.1. Name: Syndicat du Piment d'Espelette

2.2. Address: Mairie, F-64250 Espelette

2.3. Composition: producer/processor

**3. Type of product:** Vegetable — Class 1.8

**4. Specification**

(summary of requirements under Article 4(2)):

4.1. **Name:** Piment d'Espelette or Piment d'Espelette-Ezpeletako Biperra

4.2. **Description:** Piment d'Espelette chilli peppers have an intense smell dominated by fruity and smoky aromas and are fairly, but not overly, piquant on the palate. They are red when ripe and come in three market presentations:

— fresh, whole chilli peppers: totally free of any green colour, the pods are regular and conical in shape and measure 7 to 14 cm in length excluding the stalk,

- strings: the pods are strung together in twos, threes or fours; red in colour, they are regular and conical in shape and measure 7 to 14 cm in length. Strings comprise 20, 30, 40, 60, 80 or 100 even-sized peppers,
  - chilli powder: the chilli powder is made by grinding chilli peppers from the same holding. Grinding takes place after a period of ripening, followed by drying in an oven; the powder is orange-to-orangey-red in colour.
- 4.3. **Geographical area:** The geographical area of production, processing and market preparation comprises 10 communes in the department of Pyrénées-Atlantiques; the communes of Larressore and Souraïde fall entirely within the area, while Aïnhoa, Cambo-les-Bains, Espelette, Halsou, Itxassou, Jatxou, Saint-Pée-sur-Nivelle and Ustaritz fall partly within it.
- 4.4. **Proof of origin:** Introduced into the Espelette area in the 16th century, the Piment d'Espelette chilli pepper probably reached the province of Labourd through Spain in the same way as maize, which was introduced via the Nive valley. In the 17th century it replaced black pepper in the seasoning and preserving of meat. In 1745 Father Manuel de Larramendi's Basque dictionary described Piment d'Espelette chillies as a spice. They were grown in kitchen gardens by women, mainly for use in the home or for sale to pork butchers and innkeepers, large numbers of whom set up in Espelette when the trade was authorised by Louis XV.

Despite the far-reaching changes that took place in the countryside in the 19th and 20th centuries, the cultivation of Piment d'Espelette chilli peppers has continued and the crop has become closely associated with the local gastronomic tradition and the region's strong personality. The crop enables mixed cropping and stockfarming to continue. Garlands of chillies drying on house-fronts in the autumn are a typical feature of the region.

Whole, fresh Piment d'Espelette or Piment d'Espelette-Ezpeletako Biperra chilli peppers, chilli pepper strings or chilli powder can only be marketed once an approval procedure, involving sensory examinations in particular, has been followed through. Such examinations are periodical in the case of whole, fresh chilli peppers and chilli pepper strings, and a certificate of approval is granted in the case of chilli powder.

A special system of marking ensures that the designation accompanies the product from consignment. The year of harvest is shown in the case of chilli powder.

- 4.5. **Method of production:** The chilli peppers must be produced, processed and put up for market within the geographical area. They must be harvested on identified parcels located in the area of production. The pods must be exclusively of the Gorria variety of the species *Capsicum annuum L.* or must comply with the description of the variety. Producers can use seeds from their own holdings.

The chillies are planted in the open between 1 April and 15 July. They cannot be grown under shelter. At least 60 cm must be left between rows. Density of planting is between 10 000 and 30 000 plants/ha where the seedlings are planted singly and 60 000 plants/ha where the seedlings are planted two-by-two. Only natural manure of agricultural origin can be used. Irrigation is banned outside the transplanting period, except where authorised in the event of persistent drought. Protection against frost is allowed from 1 April to 31 May and at the end of the season from 25 October. The use of defoliants is banned.

The chillies are picked by hand as they ripen. Pods can be picked only where at least 80 % of the surface is red. The maximum annual yield for a parcel is one kilogram of fresh chillies per plant and 30 tonnes of fresh chillies per hectare.

The chillies are sorted by hand by the producer; within 48 hours of picking, they are sorted and consigned fresh or in strings or are sent to ripen for grinding into powder. They must not be stored in cold rooms. After sorting, chilli peppers to be sold in powder form are ripened for at least 15 days in a warm, well-aired place where they can dry naturally. After that period, the pods are dried in an oven for a few hours and then ground. The chillies for each batch of powder must come from the same holding. The last chillies of the season made into powder must be processed by 30 March following the harvest. Powder from chillies from two different harvests cannot be mixed.

- 4.6. **Link:** Piment d'Espelette chilli peppers are the only traditional chillies used as a spice that are produced in France. Given its tropical origin, the species *Capsicum annuum* L. to which Piment d'Espelette chillies belong is not suited to cultivation and processing as a spice in French climates, except under very special conditions and in the case of a variety that is adapted to them.

The plant needs regular, generous watering as it does not flourish in too little or too much water.

Similarly, the plant can only develop when the soil temperature is above 12 °C and it does well when the average temperature reaches 20 °C with only slight variation between day and night.

The little region of Espelette has unusual climatic characteristics connected with the predominant moist west and north-west flows (ocean flows), the proximity of the Atlantic to the west, the lack of any high relief between the sea and the geographical area, and the high terrain to the south and east. In this area the Pyrenees form a huge amphitheatre open to the north-west. This produces abundant, highly regular precipitation during the growing season and reduces the variation between the minimum and maximum temperatures.

Uniquely in these latitudes the area's climate thus combines just the temperature and humidity conditions that the plant needs to grow and that the pods require for processing into spice.

The local variety is the direct result of the observation and know-how of the area's producers: it reflects their relationship with the environment and is particularly well-suited to the prevailing weather conditions. Over the centuries man has succeeded in preserving the varietal type and the traditional cultivation, drying and processing techniques that have maintained the chillies' originality. Piment d'Espelette chilli peppers owe their specificity to their perfect adaptation to the area of production.

4.7. **Inspection body:**

- INAO, 138, avenue des Champs-Élysées, F-75008 Paris
- DGCCRF, 59, boulevard V. Auriol, F-75703 Paris Cedex 13.

- 4.8. **Labelling:** Labels on chilli peppers of the registered designation of origin Piment d'Espelette or Piment d'Espelette-Ezpeletako Biperra must bear the words 'Piment d'Espelette' or 'Piment d'Espelette-Ezpeletako Biperra' in letters at least 1,3 times the size of the largest characters on the label; the name of the designation must be immediately followed or preceded (with no intervening words) by the words 'Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée' or 'A.O.C.'. A special system of marking ensures that the designation accompanies the product from consignment. In the case of chilli powder, the year of harvest must be indicated.

- 4.9. **National requirements:** Decree on the registered designation of origin 'Piment d'Espelette' or 'Piment d'Espelette-Ezpeletako Biperra'.

**EC No:** G/FR/00131/2000.05.18.

**Date of receipt of full application:** 15 May 2001.

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