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

(2002/C 281/05)

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: 79

1. Responsible department in the Member State
   Name: Ministero delle Politiche agricole e forestali
   Address: Via XX Settembre, 20, I-00187 Roma
   Tel. (39) 06 481 99 68
   Fax (39) 06 42 01 31 26
   e-mail: qualita@politicheagricole.it

2. Applicant group
   2.1. Name: APO Associazione Produttori Olivicoli
   2.2. Address: Via A. di Sangiuliano, 349, I-95124 Catania
   2.3. Composition: producer/processor (x)  other ( )

3. Type of product: Class 1.5 — Extra virgin olive oil

4. Specification
   (summary of requirements under Article 4(2))
   4.1. Name: Monte Etna

   4.2. Description: Extra virgin olive oil with the following chemical and organoleptic characteristics:
      — maximum acidity 0,6 %
      — score in panel test ≥ 7
      — K 232 ≤ 2,20
      — K 270 ≤ 0,15
      — linoleic acid ≤ 10 %
      — linolenic acid ≤ 0,8 %
      — Delta K ≤ 0,005
      — peroxides ≤ 12 MeqO₂/kg
      — colour: golden yellow with green lights
      — smell: slightly fruity
      — taste: fruity with slight bitterness and pungency.
4.3. **Geographical area:** The production area of Monte Etna registered designation of origin lies around Mount Etna in the territories of municipalities in the provinces of Catania, Enna and Messina on the slopes of the mountain.

4.4. **Proof of origin:** Olive-growing was introduced into eastern Sicily by the Phoenicians in the first millennium BC and by the Greeks from the eighth century BC. The presence of the volcano, with its periodic eruptions, has nourished the myth surrounding olive production: the Cyclops, Polyphemos, the personification of Etna with his single eye, shot through with fire, was blinded by Odysseus and his companions with a stake of olive wood. Over the centuries, olive-growing developed into an industry of great economic importance to the area. By the third century BC, the Romans were imposing heavy taxes on oil produced in Sicily in order to avoid competition with that produced in Campania and Lazio. Later, during the Arab occupation, Arab ingenuity promoted and rationalised production. The importance of olive-growing on Mount Etna is attested in the work of Pietro Bembo, whose 'De Aetna' speaks of the high quality and reputation of the area's olives. Over the years, the naturalist Lazzaro Spallanzani and the writers Stoppani, Goethe, de Maupassant and many others referred to the olives of Etna. In March 1827, during his travels in Sicily, de Tocqueville wrote enthusiastically of the area, remarking on its prosperity and abundance, based on its local crops, rendered particularly fertile by the special properties conferred on its soils by the volcano. Throughout the 19th and the early 20th centuries, Etna olive oil was known and appreciated by a great number of Italian and European consumers and considerable quantities of the oil were marketed in Riposto, Etna's port.

Production, processing and bottling take place within the defined regional area. The reasons for bottling the product in the defined area are based on the need to safeguard the distinct characteristics and quality of Monte Etna oil, while ensuring that monitoring is carried out by the independent body under the supervision of the producers concerned. For the latter the protected designation of origin is critically important, offering them, in accordance with the objectives and principles of the Regulation, an opportunity to top up their income. In addition, bottling is traditionally undertaken in the defined geographical area.

The olives are from groves in the production area and growers therefore enter their groves on an appropriate, regularly updated list. Extraction of the oil, packaging and bottling are carried out within the designated area by approved undertakings entered on an appropriate list. The inspection body checks that the technical conditions laid down in the specification for entry on the lists are satisfied and that the requirements imposed on the different operators in the chain to ensure that production lots are adequately identified are met.

4.5. **Method of production:** Monte Etna extra virgin olive oil is produced using sound olives, harvested between the onset of maturity and the second 10 days of January, depending on the altitude of the land.

In addition to the 'Nocellara Etnea' cultivar, which must account for a minimum of 65 % of the olives used, the following varieties of olive may be used: 'Moresca', 'Tonda Iblea', 'Ogliarola Messinese', 'Biancolilla', 'Brandofino' and 'Olivo di Castiglione'. These varieties may be used in varying percentages but must not exceed 35 %.

Pest control is based on the procedure set out in the regional supervised control programme, with the emphasis being placed on measures having a low impact on the environment and the use of traps to monitor the flight of adult pests and the sampling of affected olives. Once infestation reaches a threshold limit, treatment may be applied using active substances at recommended dose levels. Weed control relies on cultivation methods (mowing, scything and/or ploughing).

Olive yield in the specialised olive groves must not exceed 10 000 kilograms per hectare and the maximum oil yield is 20 %.

The olives are harvested directly from the trees by removing them manually from the canopy or using machinery to facilitate the operation with nets for collection so that olives which have just been harvested are not mixed with others that have been lying on the ground for a period. Shaking of the branches and the use of abscission products are not permitted.
After harvesting, the olives must be kept until pressing in thin layers in rigid, aerated containers in premises with a low relative humidity (50 % to 60 %) and a maximum temperature of 15°. The olives must not be kept on the holding or at the mill for more than 48 hours after harvesting.

The premises at the mill used for receiving, weighing and storage must be separate from those where processing takes place and be equipped with proper natural or assisted ventilation. Monte Etna extra virgin olive oil is extracted using mechanical processes only. Crushing takes place using grindstones (the oldest form of pressing) and mechanical olive presses. Prior to pressing the leaves are removed by suction after the olives have been carefully washed in running water and passed through vibrating sieves to remove the water and any remaining leaf material or impurities. The duration of pressing depends on the ripeness of the olives and the thickness and consistency of the pulp. The period for which the olive paste remains in the press ranges according to the ripeness of the olives from 15 to 40 minutes while the temperature of the water in the outside cavity of the press must ensure that the temperature of the processed olive paste does not rise above 28 °C to 30 °C.

4.6. **Link:** The defined area is in a mountainous district, lying between 100 m and 1 000 m above sea level, around the Mount Etna volcano. It covers, in particular, Etna's northern, western and southern slopes. Olives are not grown on the eastern slope. The area's microclimate, a Mediterranean mountain climate, together with the volcanic soil with its geological substratum of eruptive rocks laid down by Etna both in the distant past and in more recent times and its sandy texture and rich skeleton give the product the unique and inimitable characteristics revealed in the chemico-physical and organoleptic tests. Recent studies, using discriminant analysis methods, have shown significant differences in the levels of free fatty acids in Monte Etna oil and those of oils from neighbouring areas, which can be ascribed to the production area. The differences are such that the chemical characteristics of the oil can be put down to the geographical origin. The area's pedo-climatic characteristics have caused the plant species present to evolve differently, to produce varieties and ecotypes with distinctive characteristics. One example of this is the 'Nocellara Etnea' cultivar, which predominates in the area. Olive-growing has been of fundamental importance for the agricultural sector in the area, because of the ability of the plant to draw maximum benefit from lava soil, for its resistance in semi-arid environments and for its role in the economy of the typical peasant family. Traditionally, oil from such areas was referred to as 'olio di montagna' (mountain oil) to distinguish it from oil from neighbouring areas. Highly prized by consumers, who recognise the superior quality and organoleptic properties of the oil, it commands prices 20 %-25 % higher than those of other oils on the market.

4.7. **Inspection body**

Name: Agroqualità SARL.
Address: Piazza Sallustio, 21, I-00187 Roma.

4.8. **Labelling:** 'Olio extra vergine di oliva “Monte Etna” Denominazione di Origine Protetta.'

The name of the designation must appear on the label in distinct, indelible lettering of a colour that strongly contrasts with that of the label itself such as to be clearly distinguishable from the other information given on the label.

The year in which the olives are harvested must be shown on the label.

The oil must be released for consumption in containers not exceeding 5 litres in capacity.

4.9. **National requirements:** —

EC No: G/IT/00060/97.12.22.

**Date of receipt of the full application:** 12 August 2002.