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

(2003/C 207/06)

This publication confers the right to object to the application pursuant to Articles 7 and 12d of the abovementioned Regulation. Any objection to this application must be submitted via the competent authority in a Member State, in a WTO member country or in a third country recognised in accordance with Article 12(3) 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 ( ) PGI (x)

National Application No: 78

1. Responsible department in the Member State

Name: Subdirección General de Sistemas de Calidad Diferenciada — Dirección General de Alimentación — Secretaría General de Agricultura y Alimentación del Ministerio de Agricultura, Pesca y Alimentación de España

Address: Paseo de la Infanta Isabel, 1, E-28071 Madrid

Tel. (34) 913 47 53 94

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2. Applicant group

2.1. Name:

(a) Asociación de Jóvenes Agricultores de Asturias (ASAJA)

(b) Coordinadora de Organizaciones de Agricultores y Ganaderos (COAG — Asturias)

(c) Unión de Campesinos Asturianos (UCA)

(d) Unión de Cooperativas Agrarias Asturianas (UCAPA)

(e) Asociación de Investigación de Industrias de la Carne del Principado de Asturias

(f) Cárnica Hicor

(g) Cárnica García Nuño

2.2. Address:

(a) Primo de Rivera, 1, ofic. 32-34, — E-33001 Oviedo

(b) Gascona, 19-1º A — E-33011 Oviedo

(c) Marqués de Santa Cruz, 6 — E-33007 Oviedo
2.3. Composition: Producer/processor (x) Other ( )

3. **Type of product:** Class 1.1 — Fresh bovine meat.

4. **Specification:**

   (Summary of requirements under Article 4(2))

   4.1. **Name:** ‘Ternera Asturiana’

   4.2. **Description:** The indication protects fresh bovine meat from animals born, reared and fattened in the Principality of Asturias and that fulfil all the requirements of the specification.

   Only animals of the ‘Asturiana de los Valles’ and ‘Asturiana de la Montaña’ breeds and crosses between them can be used for meat production. Suckling is for a minimum of five months.

   Animals may also be obtained from crossing pure-bred males of the ‘Asturiana de los Valles’ and ‘Asturiana de la Montaña’ breeds with females that are genetically descended from either of the indigenous Asturian breeds but which do not exhibit characteristics of absolute purity and display certain morphological characteristics not in keeping with the standard animals of those breeds.

   The dams and the calves covered by the PGI do not necessarily have to be entered in the official herd books of the two breeds.

   Products are categorised on the basis of the age of the animal at slaughter as:

   a) ‘Ternera’: animal slaughtered at a maximum of 12 months old;

   b) ‘Añojo’: animal slaughtered at between 12 and 18 months old.

   In each category, products are differentiated according to the carcase classification:

   — ‘culón’: for carcasses with an S or E conformation according to the Community system for carcase classification, except for animals of the ‘Asturiana de la Montaña’ breed;

   — ‘valles’: for animals with a U or R conformation according to the Community system for carcase classification, except for animals of the ‘Asturiana de la Montaña’ breed;

   — ‘casín’: for animals of the ‘Asturiana de la Montaña’ breed with an R or superior classification.

   In all cases, the carcasses must comply with types SEUR and the fat cover with grades 2 and 3, except for classes S and E where grade 1 is permitted.
The pH value 24 hours after slaughter must be less than six.

The colour of the meat must be between values ‘2’ (pink) and ‘4’ (red) and comply with the quality standard for bovine carcases.

As regards the organoleptic characteristics, the meat has the superior flavour and tenderness associated with the ‘Asturiana de los Valles’ breed and the superior flavour and succulence associated with the ‘Asturiana de la Montaña’ breed.

4.3. Geographical area: The animals are reared and the feed produced in an area comprising the whole of the Autonomous Community of the Principality of Asturias. Processing is carried out in the same area.

4.4. Proof of origin The Regulatory Council will establish various registers and the product will be identified at each stage so as to ensure traceability. The registers are as follows:

— register of stockfarms,
— register of slaughterhouses,
— register of cutting plants,
— register of wholesale suppliers.

Checks on origin on registered holdings involve the individual identification of calves before they are 20 days old. When animals are registered, an information sheet is drawn up containing details of the producer and the animal. The information sheet must accompany the animal until it is slaughtered. All incidents and transfer, sale, death or transportation to non-registered holdings or undertakings must be notified to the Regulatory Council.

The animals must be suitably identified on arrival at the slaughterhouse by means of the eartag, the registration sheet and the other official documentation.

The slaughterhouse assigns a slaughter number and notifies the details of the calf and the carcase to the Regulatory Council and keeps the eartag for verification. The slaughterhouse enters the details in the slaughterhouse register. The Regulatory Council checks the data and the documentation before certifying each carcase. If evaluation shows the carcase to comply with the rules, it is then identified by marking and certified with a numbered label and a guarantee certificate.

Carcasses must arrive at the cutting plant and/or wholesale supplier correctly identified and certified. The later must inform the Regulatory Council of the details of carcases received, the cutting work carried out and the carcases or cuts despatched. The details must be entered by each undertaking in its sales register and by each cutting plant. All carcases and cuts must be identified individually by means of the labels approved by the Regulatory Council.

Checking and analysis procedures must be established at each stage, from the registration of livestock holdings to the certification of the protected product.

4.5. Method of production: The protected meat is from animals born, reared and fattened in the geographical area of the protected geographical indication and that have been suckled by their dam for a minimum of five months.

Their feed is that characteristic of extensive stockfarming: dam’s milk and natural fodder. From weaning, the feed is supplemented with cereal- and pulse-based concentrates.

Production, slaughter, cutting and storage are carried out in registered installations in accordance with the established standards. The animals are transported to the slaughterhouse and slaughtered in registered slaughterhouses and the carcases are labelled, stored and matured at registered installations.
4.6. **Link:** The Asturiana breed of cattle, which has been in the region since time immemorial, is the most important chestnut breed in the Iberian Peninsula, in terms of both numbers and its production characteristics. The biomorphological characteristics of the bones excavated at Campa de Torres (Gijón) indicate that today’s breeds were reared in the fourth and fifth centuries BC.

The ‘Asturiana de los Valles’ breed was originally reared for three reasons, meat, milk and work, in low-altitude areas and then spread to the whole of Asturias. From the eleventh century, there was a great expansion of stock, particularly in the western central area, promoted by the monasteries, which required the control of large areas of grazing land, which stockfarming made more valuable.

Extensive stockfarming on common pastures was a source of constant conflict for centuries. In 1277, the first ‘Hermandad’ was established, the main aim of which was to set up an association for the exploitation of grazing land for livestock from the sea to the Asturian-Leonese mountains, promoting the formation of transhumant herds grazing in high areas in summer and low areas in winter.

More recently, in the nineteenth century, there were large numbers of indigenous cattle distributed throughout Asturias. In 1836 and 1842, the British Consul in Asturias, J.J. Kelly, informed the Foreign Office of the large numbers of livestock in the region.

Abril Brocas (1918) estimated the total number of cattle in Asturias to be 406 534, of which a large number were exported to the markets of Madrid, Barcelona and Valencia.

With mechanisation and the introduction of specialised dairy breeds, the ‘Asturiana’ breed began to be used less and less for milk and work and became restricted to marginal areas of the Asturian mountains where a production system suited to the area was employed, the techniques and traditions of which have been passed down from parent to child to the present day.

The numbers of beef cattle have increased considerably in recent years, so that now their numbers exceed those of dairy cattle and indigenous Asturian breeds represented more than 28 % of total cattle numbers in the region in 1999, as against only 10 % in 1986. This shows a clear commitment by producers in the region to the meat production practised by their ancestors.

Asturias is a typical stockfarming region, with holdings rearing beef cattle from the coast to the high mountains.

The stockfarming system is based on suckler cows and the use of natural pasture, pasture close to the holding and mountain pasture during the milder times of year, supplemented with fodder and silage during the colder periods.

The feeding and management of slaughter cattle whose meat is to be covered by the PGI are based on the traditional methods used in the region, involving the exploitation of local resources and characterised by a number of features exhibited by Asturian meat production that are linked to geographical and sociological factors particular to the Autonomous Community.

The vegetation of Asturias is typical of an Atlantic region dominated by deciduous forests, which thrive on the region’s heavy rainfall and mild temperatures, but is also influenced by pedological, climatic and biotic factors.

The high grassland and pastures have a wide range of vegetation, composed principally of species of value for agriculture, such as grasses, pulses and Labiatae, which are suitable for grazing. The most important grassland species are ‘anthoxanthum odoratum’, ‘trifolium pratense’, ‘lotus corniculatus’, ‘centaurea nigra’, ‘nardus stricta’, ‘festuca rubra’ s.l. and ‘trifolium repens’.

The animals must be suckled for at least the first five months of life. Feed must be natural and traditional and the use of substances that alter the normal growth rates of the animals, pose a risk to human consumers or have a negative effect on the quality of the meat are prohibited.
During the period of suckling, the calves accompany the dams to the natural hay meadows and/or mountain pastures, depending on when calving occurs, being weaned gradually, as they increase their consumption of grass. Suckling, the use of natural pasture, cereal- and pulse-based concentrates to supplement the diet after weaning and an adequate maturing period for the meat give the product its special characteristics as regards flavour, tenderness and succulence.

The Asturian breeds are raised on three types of holding, depending on the geographical location and feed resources available. The three systems used are traditional, semi-intensive or semi-stabling and improved pasture.

The traditional management system is used in the mountain areas of south-western Asturias, where the majority of the ‘Asturiana de los Valles’ breed is to be found, and with the ‘Asturiana de la Montaña’ breed in the mountain areas of eastern Asturias. The holdings are small and depend, to a large extent, on the availability of common land.

During early spring when temperatures are mild and there is adequate feed, the cattle graze the meadows close to the holding. In mid-May or at the beginning of June, the passes (1 600-1 700 m) open and the animals can go up into the mountains. Calves accompany their dams up to the high meadows where they remain for the season, considerably reducing the work involved in watching the herds over the summer months. The meadows close to the holding are mown for hay during this period. This hay will provide almost all the cattle's winter feed, although recently the trend has been also to produce silage.

The semi-intensive management system is to be found in the low-lying coastal areas of Asturias. The system is very similar to that used for dairy cattle. The terrain of these areas is suitable for more modern farming methods and allows a more sophisticated feed regime than the traditional system. The feed of beef cattle in these areas is generally similar to that for dairy cattle, based on maize silage, pasture, dried grass, fresh grass in the stable and feedingstuffs.

The improved-pasture system, used in western Asturias, is a recent development in the Autonomous Community. The holdings on which it is used, although sometimes standing relatively high above sea level, are on gently sloping land suitable for mechanised farming, which facilitates their exploitation. Measures have been implemented to exploit the available resources, clearing large areas of thicket to create pasture.

Today's holdings are large and the average number of dams per farm is high. Animals are pastured throughout the year. This extensive system tends to simplify herd management. The cattle are brought inside only in the event of heavy snow, in which case they are fed mainly grass silage and, to a lesser extent, dried grass.

Studies carried out in 1998 to assess the image of Asturian meat and its speciality 'Ternera Asturiana' in the eyes of the consumer, at both national level and within its zone of influence, showed that the products were well known and had a high reputation. A total of 29.4 % of the Spanish public knew of Asturian meat and this figure rose to 42.2 % in the area of influence. According to 23.3 % of the Spanish population, the best meat comes from Asturias. That figure rose to 38.0 % in the area of influence.

Scientific studies on Asturian calves (project INIA SC93/-053), comparing the quality criteria of seven indigenous Spanish breeds of beef cattle reared using extensive methods, reached highly satisfactory conclusions regarding the organoleptic properties of Asturian veal. It was found to be the best as regards the quality and intensity of its aroma and as regards succulence, flavour and tenderness. In the overall assessment, it was given second place and first place when enjoyment was the sole criterion.

As a result of its reputation, 'Ternera Asturiana' has a specific name and commands higher prices on important markets (Mercado Nacional de Pola de Siero) and is referred to under that name in traditional butchers' shops, large and small supermarkets, brochures, advertising, recipes and elsewhere.
4.7. **Inspection body:**

   Name: Consejería de Medio Rural y Pesca del Principado de Asturias

   Address: Edificio Administrativo, C/ Coronel Aranda, s/n — E-33005 Oviedo.

4.8. **Labelling:** Attached to each carcase protected by the PGI ‘Ternera Asturiana’ is a numbered label checked by the Regulatory Council.

   Similarly, all meat for consumption from carcasses protected by the PGI have a label approved by the Regulatory Council and a numbered second label checked and supplied by the Regulatory Council, which is attached before the product is despatched in such a way that it cannot be reused, and the protected product is traceable throughout the chain.

4.9. **National requirements**


   — Royal Decree 1643/1999 of 22 October 1999 laying down the procedure for processing applications for entry in the Community Register of Protected Designations of Origin and Geographical Indications.

**EC No:** ES/00182/01.01.24.

**Date of receipt of the full application:** 23 June 2003.