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

(2004/C 93/11)

This publication confers the right to object to the application pursuant to Articles 7 and 12(d) 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 recognized 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 (x) PGI ( )

National application No: 8/2003

1. Responsible department in the Member State

Name: Ministero delle Politiche agricole e forestali

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2. Applicant group

2.1. Name: Comitato Promotore per riconoscimento DOP Zafferano di San Gimignano

2.2. Address: Via delle fonti 3/A San Gimignano (SI)

Tel. (39) 577 95 02 32

2.3. Composition: producer/processor (x) other ( )

3. Type of product: Class 1.8 — Other Annex I products — Spices

4. Specification

(Summary of requirements under Article 4(2))

4.1. Name: ‘Zafferano di San Gimignano’
4.2. Description: 'Zafferano di San Gimignano' is produced by roasting the orange-red coloured part of the floral stigmas of *Crocus sativus* L., a corm of the iridaceae family. The stigmas have the form of broad threads, spread at the tip. After roasting, their colour changes from orange to claret-red. They should be marketed whole and satisfy the following chemical characteristics under standard ISO 3632-1:1993 (test method: ISO 3632-2: 1993, point 13).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Colouring power expressed as a direct measure of absorbency of crocin at about 440 nm. over dry base</th>
<th>Bitterness expressed as a direct measure of absorbency of picrocrocin at about 257 nm. over dry base</th>
<th>Aromatic power safranal expressed as a direct measure of absorbency at about 330 nm. over dry base</th>
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<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>190 min.</td>
<td>70 min.</td>
<td>from 20 to 50</td>
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</table>

4.3. Geographical area: The area of production of 'Zafferano di San Gimignano' is the territory of the municipality of San Gimignano (SI).

4.4. Proof of origin: There are many records of this product originating in San Gimignano from the thirteenth-century. The quality and fame of San Gimignano saffron from 1200 is documented not only by the substantial export trade to other centres in Italy (Pisa 1238, Genoa 1291) but also by the unprecedented flow to eastern and African countries (Alexandria in Egypt, Tunis, Damietta, Acre, Tripoli and Aleppo between 1221 and 1247). The profits from the trade in saffron were sufficient to make the fortunes of several families, some of which — as is attested by various sources — decided to devote them to the construction of the famous towers which are still emblematic of the city. Saffron frequently appears in deeds of gift: in 1241, for example, the Comunità sent 25 pounds to the Emperor Frederick II who was camped nearby.

Historical documentation on the cultivation of the crocus (the common name for *Crocus sativus*) in San Gimignano is extraordinarily rich, so that we can derive the location of the fields used. A number of sources attest to the use of saffron in cooking, dyeing, medicine and painting from the thirteenth-century. It is mentioned in medieval financial and contractual documents and in laws and municipal regulations.

Very many sources attest to the traditional cultivation of saffron in San Gimignano. The large bibliography includes:

A. Petino: ‘Lo zafferano nell’economia del Medioevo’ pag. 172,

D. Abulafia: ‘Crociati e zafferano’,

E. Fiumi: ‘Storia economica e sociale di S. Gimignano’,

V. R. Ciasca: l’arte dei medici e degli speziali nella storia del commercio fiorentino dei sec. XII e XV.

Today, although saffron no longer has the major financial importance of former times, it is still very important for gastronomy and pharmaceuticals.

The origin of 'Zafferano di San Gimignano' will be guaranteed by a system of traceability based on the registration of producers and the land concerned by the supervisory body within the meaning of Article 10 of Regulation (EEC) No 2081/92.

4.5. Method of production: The first stage in the selection of the corms for planting is the rejection of any which are mouldy, marked or cut. They are planted in sandy or sandy-loam soil, which is the basic type in the area of San Gimignano, after the outer skin and any traces of the roots of the parent bulb have been removed, between the beginning of August and mid-September. The fertiliser used is organic. The flowers are harvested by hand early in the morning while they are still closed from the beginning of October to the end of November.
Once harvested, the flowers are taken to covered areas where, on the same day as they were harvested, they undergo ‘mondatura’ (cleaning) or ‘sfioritura’ (deflowering), an operation carried out by hand to separate the orange-red part of the stigmas while avoiding removing the whitish-yellow part. They are kept in hermetically sealed glass jars into which they are placed no more than five minutes after the completion of drying. These jars are kept in cool, dry areas, out of direct light. They are then dried, always at a temperature below 50 °C. The stigmas are placed on nets or in sieves, usually of stainless steel, close to glowing charcoal derived from forest wood. They are stirred continuously to ensure that the process is uniform. Other forms of drying, such as the sun or electric ovens, are permitted.

4.6. **Link**: The sub-arid climate which prevails in the area of production, particularly because of the lack of water in summer, has a positive influence, as is shown by the relevant scientific literature on the cultivation of the plant.

The relief and soil are particularly suitable with a landscape of sandy-loam soil which drains well. The area of San Gimignano is propitious for the production of saffron, since the soil is permeable, well drained and healthy and the average annual rainfall is not high but concentrated in the winter with dry summers. The local relief is almost uniformly hilly with heights ranging from 170 m to 624 m, rolling and with slight or moderate slopes and some slight surface erosion. The valley bottom area is slight compared with the area of the hills. There are no water courses of note in the San Gimignano area and the water network is slight and irregularly distributed.

An analysis of the soil reveals it to be sandy or sandy-loam with little clay, well developed and generally fertile, fairly permeable, highly porous, very well drained and so able to hold a lot of air. The climate too is favourable for saffron growing. Rainfall is highest in autumn and spring and lowest in summer. The range of temperatures over the year places the climate of San Gimignano in the sub-coastal/continental range. This combination makes the area excellent for saffron growing since the plant may be considered to have found its natural habitat there, becoming a local feature. Besides the undoubted suitability of the area, there is a link with the product deriving from a series of economic, social and production factors, all of long standing. The cultivation of saffron in San Gimignano has a long tradition, being documented from 1200. Every operation from the harvesting of the flowers to the selection of the stigmas and drying is still carried out by hand with no technical assistance. The ‘mondatura’ or ‘sfioritura’ are also carried out by hand with the utmost care and identification of the ideal time of roasting is done by eye on the basis of experience acquired over years by the oldest operators.

Saffron is mentioned in contracts in many medieval documents in San Gimignano. Particularly common in the countryside was the contract involving an advance cash payment for a certain quantity of saffron to be delivered at harvest time, ‘ad novellum’. Because of its versatility, it was also used instead of money. There are also historic links between trade in saffron and the rigid rules issued by the municipality to guarantee its weight and quality. The accuracy of weighing operations was entrusted to the Arte dei Medici e Speziali, who also checked the scales. Evidence of that activity can still be found today in San Gimignano in the persistence of surnames such as Pesalgruoghi or Pesalgruoci.

Today ‘Zafferano di San Gimignano’ has been widely rediscovered for gastronomic and pharmacological use. In the area its uses in production and manufacturing are the traditional ones faithfully using the same methods. Many operations are still carried out by hand as they were in the Middle Ages: the selection of the bulbs, the harvesting of the flowers early in the morning, cleaning and drying near a fire.
It is used in local foods and some specialities, sometimes together with other typical products of San Gimignano, such as bread with vernaccia and saffron, and schiacciata with saffron. Certain texts such as the recipe book by an anonymous Tuscan of the fourteenth-century demonstrate how the importance of saffron in cooking has changed today compared with the past. Saffron was the basic ingredient of dishes such as 'i pestelli', 'la poverata', 'l'agliata', 'la porrata' and of certain cheeses. The lack of attention to saffron is due mainly to a change in habits in recent years which has considerably undermined traditional practices and products. Today, fortunately, this trend has reversed, giving rise to a whole series of initiatives and events. For years, in the autumn when the crocuses are cleaned, San Gimignano has been holding a festival called 'giallo come l'oro' (yellow as gold), to draw public attention to the cultural aspects of the consumption of saffron.

4.7. Inspection body

Name: AGROQUALITÀ

Address: Via Montebello, 8 — Roma

4.8. Labelling: The product is prepared by hand and marketed with the stigmas left whole, or in threads. The packaging containing between 0,1 and 1 gram comprises envelopes or containers of food-quality material.

The packaging must bear a clear and legible printed label, the Community logo and corresponding wording and the information required by law plus:

— 'Zafferano di San Gimignano' (not translated), and, written out or as an acronym (DOP), the expression 'Denominazione di Origine Protetta'. These indications must appear in characters at least twice the size of the others,

— the name, trade name and address of the producer and packager.

No other wording not expressly allowed may appear.

However, wording referring to private trademarks used, provided it does not seek to promote the product or deceive the consumer, the name of the holding of cultivation and other genuine references which can be documented and are allowed by Community, national or regional rules and do not conflict with the aims and content of these rules may be used.

Products prepared using 'Zafferano di San Gimignano' DOP as a raw material, even if it is prepared and processed, may be marketed in packaging bearing a reference to this designation without the Community logo, provided that:

— 'Zafferano di San Gimignano' DOP, certified as such, is the sole component of the class of goods to which it belongs,

— the users of 'Zafferano di San Gimignano' DOP are authorised by the holders of the intellectual property rights conferred by the registration della denominazione 'Zafferano di San Gimignano' DOP united in a consortium under the supervision of the Ministry of Agricultural and Forest Policies. That consortium is also responsible for entering them in an appropriate register and supervising the correct use of the protected designation. If there is no such consortium, these duties will be carried out by the Ministry as the national authority for the implementation of Regulation (EEC) No 2081/92.
The non-exclusive use of the ‘Zafferano di San Gimignano’ DOP permits only a reference, in accordance with the rules in force, as one of the ingredients of the product which contains it or into which it has been processed or manufactured.

The logo of the product comprises the reproduction below, a design representing a silhouette of San Gimignano on a gold ground with a crocus flower left of centre with its petals in the foreground in white and lilac (Pantone 258). The three stigmas of the saffron are in red (Pantone 180). In the lower part is the word ‘ZAFFERANO’ in dearjoe font in black on a gold ground and in the space below ‘DI SAN GIMIGNANO’ in di Murphic Full font in black on a white ground. The logo is 36 mm square.

It may be adapted proportionately to suit the various types of use.

4.9. National requirements: —

EC No: IT/00289/08.05.2003.

Date of receipt of the full application: 8 December 2003.