OTHER ACTS

COMMISSION

Publication of an application pursuant to Article 6(2) of Council Regulation (EC) No 510/2006 on the protection of geographical indications and designations of origin for agricultural products and foodstuffs

(2007/C 244/07)

This publication confers the right to object to the application pursuant to Article 7 of Council Regulation (EC) No 510/2006 (1). Statements of objection must reach the Commission within six months of the date of this publication.

SUMMARY

COUNCIL REGULATION (EC) No 510/2006
‘VLAAMS-BRABANTSE TAFELDRUIF’
EC No: BE/PDO/005/0534/24.03.2006
PDO ( X ) PGI ( )

This summary sets out the main elements of the product specification for information purposes.

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   Composition: Producers/processors ( X ) Other ( )

3. Type of product:
   Class 1.6: Vegetables, fruit and cereals

4. Specification:

(Summary of requirements under Article 4(2) of Regulation (EC) No 510/2006)

4.1. Name: ‘Vlaams-Brabantse tafeldruif’

4.2. Description: The ‘Vlaams-Brabantse tafeldruif’ (Flemish Brabant table grape) is a grape which comprises both white and black varieties. The black varieties comprise ‘Frankenthal De Coster’, ‘Royal’, ‘Ribier’, ‘Leopold III’ and ‘Gros Colman’. The white varieties are ‘Muscat d’Alexandrie’, ‘Canon Hall’ and ‘Baidor’. Both the fresh and the cooled form are included. The ‘Vlaams-Brabantse tafeldruif’ is characterised by its high quality standard. By limiting the number of grapes per bunch the grape size is increased. On average one grape weighs 10 grams. The black grapes are slightly larger than the white ones. Typically the grapes are sweet and large and covered in a layer of down; the bunches are beautifully formed. A ripe bunch weighing 800 grams contains around 70 to 80 grapes. The sweetness of the grapes is guaranteed by the temperature in the glasshouses, which averages between 15 and 20 degrees. The grower checks the grapes regularly for ripeness, the aim being an optimum sweet/sour balance and a rich aroma.

4.3. Geographical area: The ‘Vlaams-Brabantse tafeldruif’ is grown in a hilly area characterised by its many south-facing slopes, mainly along the Ijse Valley through the municipalities of Hoeilaart, Overijse and Huldenberg.

The growing area lies to the southeast of Brussels, at the southern edge of the Soignes Forest, and comprises the municipalities of Hoeilaart and Overijse; the Neerijse, Loonbeek and Huldenberg districts of the municipality of Huldenberg; and the Duisburg district of the municipality of Tervuren.

4.4. Proof of origin: Grape growers who grow the ‘Vlaams-Brabantse tafeldruif’ have to register in January each year with the applicant group De Sterredruif and inform De Sterredruif each year how many glasshouses they will use for growing the grape. The group keeps the register up to date and makes it available to the inspection body responsible. Labels are produced on the basis of the register.

4.5. Method of production: The ‘Vlaams-Brabantse tafeldruif’ is grown in heated glasshouses. Cultivation is entirely by hand.

— The propagating material comprises vines used for planting. These are obtained either by allowing a cutting to strike root directly for immediate planting as a vine or further use as graft material, or by grafting the cuttings. The cuttings, the one-year-old parts of which are used as grafts, must in all cases originate from the specified geographical area and may be taken only from the varieties referred to under point 4.2.

— The glasshouses have to be ventilated in order to regulate the temperature and the air. From the start of heating until the eyes sprout, high humidity may be maintained in the glasshouse. This promotes sprouting. Since vines are wind pollinators, during flowering the glasshouse should be thoroughly ventilated — weather permitting. After flowering the temperature may increase slightly in order to encourage the grapes to swell. Light ventilation begins as the temperature rises above 22 to 25 degrees, and is gradually increased in order to avoid exceeding 28 to 30 degrees.

— During thinning the grapes which have remained small, those facing inwards and those too close together are removed. At most two grapes per stalk may remain. A ripe bunch which has been well thinned has uniformly large grapes pressing lightly against each other. Thinning each bunch takes about a quarter of an hour. The grapes must be touched as little as possible so that they do not lose their down layer.

— Since the average temperature of the glasshouses must be between 15 and 20 degrees, they have to be heated during certain months. There are three types of cultivation: early cultivation in which the glasshouses are heated from January until the harvest scheduled for mid-July; intermediate cultivation in which the glasshouses are heated from around mid-February until mid-March — during the full summer period these grapes may be able to ripen further cold and the harvest is scheduled from mid-August; late cultivation in which the glasshouses are heated from April until mid-May and again from around mid-September to promote ripening just before the harvest scheduled from mid-September.

— One of the typical characteristics of the ‘Vlaams-Brabantse tafeldruif’ is the natural down layer, which is obtained as the outermost shield particles die off. In order to retain this layer, the use of chemical pesticides is prohibited from the flowering period onwards.
4.6. Link: The typical cultivation of the ‘Vlaams-Brabantse tafeldruif’ has come about through a combination of natural, historical and human factors.

The geographical area described under 4.2. is known in Belgium as the ‘Druivenstreek’ (Grape Region). The area has a temperate, humid climate. It does not experience pronounced dry or wet periods but more or less even precipitation of approximately 780 mm a year brought by the prevailing southwesterly and westerly winds. That precipitation is an important factor for grape cultivation under glass because table grapes require a lot of water. In order to supply this, glasshouse growers bore groundwater wells or dig large pits to collect the rainwater which falls on the glasshouses. Geologically, the ‘Druivenstreek’ forms part of the Belgian loam area. The relief is strongly undulating along the major valleys, with differences in height of up to 60 metres. The most important valley is formed by the River Ijse. Through the direction of the main Ijse Valley, from southwest to northeast, the southern-facing slopes can derive maximum benefit from sunlight. In some places this even creates a warm microclimate. Almost the whole area is covered with a loess layer of varying thickness, deposited by the wind during the last ice age. Under the loess layer there is a layer of gravel, including rolled flintstones and sandstone fragments. The gravel layer was created by erosion of the sand, loam and clay during the tertiary ice ages. Since loam does not hold a water table and the underlying layers tend to be sandy, the resulting area is extremely well-drained. These well-drained soils are ideal for growing grapes; although grapes require a lot of water, vines themselves do not tolerate damp soil. It is therefore the combination of temperate and humid surroundings, the direction of the Ijse Valley with its sunny south-facing slopes and the well-drained soil which enable the ‘Vlaams-Brabantse tafeldruif’ to be cultivated in this geographical area.

Just as in the rest of Europe, more exotic crops were experimented with in this area’s castle gardens. In the castle glasshouse at Huldenberg, Felix Sohie took the first steps in grape cultivation, with such success that he saw a future in it. In 1865 Felix Sohie built the first grape glasshouse at Hoeilaart and made the necessary technical improvements so that grapes could already be harvested in the spring. His example was followed and over the next few decades glasshouses sprang up throughout the area. Grape growing radically changed the area’s appearance. According to the general agricultural census of 1910, there were for example 5176 glasshouses in Hoeilaart. In 1961 the total number of glasshouses in the ‘Druivenstreek’ peaked at 34,929. Following the establishment of the European Economic Community and the energy crises of 1973 and 1979, however, grape cultivation in the area fell sharply.

The ‘Vlaams-Brabantse tafeldruif’ is cultivated in heated glasshouses where almost all the work is done entirely by hand: winter pruning, working the soil, fertilising, removing shoots, protecting against strong sunshine, organically combating possible diseases, misting and watering, glasshouse maintenance, monitoring, etc. There is always work to be done. The growers really have to know their craft. Thinning is characteristic for the production area. With some foreign-grown grapes, small grapes are removed during packing, but the specific qualitative aspect of our thinning is not attained. Also, the grapes must be touched as little as possible otherwise a lot of down is removed and it is precisely the down layer which constitutes the qualitative characteristic of the ‘Vlaams-Brabantse tafeldruif’. Over the years the growers have sought improvements and higher yields, whereby inter alia new grape varieties have been obtained through selection or cross-fertilisation.

The local know-how is also demonstrated by craftsmen’s specialisation in building glasshouses for growing grapes. Between the commencement of grape cultivation at Hoeilaart (1865) and the turn of the century, a construction method was developed which addressed a number of technical difficulties: building on steep slopes; preventing collapse under the weight of iron, glass and grapes; collecting rainwater; ventilation and heating problems, etc. Building glasshouses thus became a specialism for a number of craftsmen: bricklayers for the walls; joiners for the roof framework; smiths for the angle irons, T-irons and tools; and glaziers or roofers.

A particular folklore developed around grape production in the geographical area. Glasshouse growers used to bring their finest bunches of grapes with great pride to annual grape shows in the area’s different villages. The shows were usually organised to coincide with local fairs. In Hoeilaart (third week in September) and Overijse (last week in August) these expanded to become annual grape festivals including the election of a grape queen and holding a grape race and a grape procession, etc. The history of grape cultivation is also exhibited and preserved at the Overijse grape museum.
4.7. Inspection body:

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4.8. Labelling: Each bunch of grapes will be given a label bearing the European PDO symbol, the name ‘Vlaams-Brabantse tafeldruif’ and the name of the grower or his holding. The bunches will be labelled only on the grower’s holding in order to guarantee the origin and traceability of the ‘Vlaams-Brabantse tafeldruif’, since the majority (more than 60 %) are sold by the producer via direct sale (door-to-door or at markets).