Publication of an application for registration pursuant to Article 8(2) of Council Regulation (EC) No 509/2006 on agricultural products and foodstuffs as traditional specialities guaranteed (2009/C 305/10)

This publication confers the right to object to the application pursuant to Article 9 of Council Regulation (EC) No 509/2006. Statements of objection must reach the Commission within six months from the date of this publication.

APPLICATION FOR REGISTRATION OF A TSG

COUNCIL REGULATION (EC) No 509/2006
‘OVČÍ SALAŠNÍCKY ÚDENÝ SYR’
EC No: SK-TSG-0007-0045-20.10.2006

1. Name and address of the applicant group:
   Name: Družstvo – „Cech výrobcov ovčieho syra v Turci”
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2. Member State or third country:
   Slovak Republic

3. Product specification:
3.1. Name(s) to be registered:
   ‘Ovčí salašnícky údený syr’

3.2. Whether the name:
   □ is specific in itself
   ☑ expresses the specific character of the agricultural product or foodstuff

   The specific character is determined by the nature of the raw materials, i.e. raw sheep’s milk, the traditional method of processing in shepherd’s huts and by smoking. The term ‘salašnícky’ in the name expresses the product’s specific nature and is derived from the word ‘salaš’, denoting a shepherd’s hut, where the cheese is made, and hence also expresses a link to the place of production.

3.3. Whether reservation of the name is sought under Article 13(2) of Regulation (EC) No 509/2006:
   □ Registration with reservation of the name
   ☑ Registration, without reservation of the name

3.4. Type of product:
   1.3 Cheeses

3.5. Description of the agricultural product or foodstuff to which the name under point 3.1 applies:
   ‘Ovčí salašnícky údený syr’ is produced from fresh sheep’s milk, processed in shepherd’s huts, smoked and often formed into specific shapes (hearts, cockerels or other animals, hemispheres).
Physical properties:
— comes in various shapes, most often a lump, or if a mould was used in production, in the shape of the mould: hemispherical, or in the shape of different animals or in the shape of a heart,
— weight: varies from 0.1 kg to 1 kg.

Chemical properties:
— dry matter: at least 40 % by weight,
— fat content by weight in dry matter: at least 50 %,
— NaCl: max. 25 000 mg/kg.

Microbiological criteria:
Contains a range of microorganisms, including in particular:

Acidogenic microorganisms — Streptococcus lactis, Leuconostos mesenteroides, Lactobacillus casei, Lactobacillus plantarum, yeasts and moulds — Torulopsis candida, Geotrichum candidum, Geotrichum casei.

Organoleptic properties:
— external appearance: dry, firm, intact surface, with a crust, possibly also with small smoke stains, free of tar residue,
— colour: yellowish to yellow in cross-section; brownish to slightly chestnut on the surface,
— odour and taste: smoky aroma, with a mild, slightly acidic taste,
— consistency: firm and solid when cut, with small holes and small cracks here and there.

3.6. Description of the production method for the agricultural product or foodstuff to which the name under point 3.1 applies:

Collection of sheep’s milk:
— milk for the production of the cheese is obtained from healthy sheep (grazed sheep of races reared in mountain and foothill areas) by hand-milking in a milking pen (strunga) located in natural conditions. The milk is collected in a rust-proof milking pail with a filtering device (traditionally the milk was collected in a wooden pail). When the pail (geleta) is full, its contents are strained into a milk can through a sieve containing a cotton-wool filter (the milk may also be collected mechanically in a mobile or stationary milking parlour),
— the milk collected is transferred in the milk cans to the production area — a shepherd's hut (salaš).

Processing the milk into cheese — production of ‘ovčí salašnický údený syr’:
— the freshly collected milk is processed immediately after milking, after being transferred to the production area in the shepherd's hut, where it is poured from the can into a putera, a vessel used for cheese production; during this process, it is re-filtered through a cotton-wool filter. A wooden vessel (putera) or stainless steel double-bottomed vessel is used for the production of the cheese,
— the temperature of the milk is raised to 30-32 °C by adding two to three litres of hot drinking water (at a temperature of 50 °C) per 50 litres of milk directly to the milk or by heating it with the aid of hot drinking water in a jacketed vessel (putera) or boiled sour sheep's milk whey,
— after the temperature has been raised to 30-32 °C, microbial liquid rennet (based on the salt-stabilised fungus Rhizomucor miehei) is added, with continuous stirring, at a quantity of 40 ml of rennet per 100 l of milk. The amount of rennet used also depends on the milking period (the quality of the milk, which changes during the milking period). The milk curdles approximately 30-45 minutes after the rennet is added (the amount of rennet is determined by the producer),
— the curds thus produced are stirred and cut with a curd-harp until a grain size of 0.5-1 cm is obtained,
boiled drinking water, cooled to 65 °C, is added to the cut curds in order to heat them to 32-35 °C, thus improving the release of whey from the grains. The curds are stirred well and left to rest. Throughout the production of the sheep's milk lump cheese, the temperature of the milk and whey must not fall below 29 °C,

the traditional method of shaping the cheese consists in compressing the settled curds by hand after about ten minutes and working them into the shape of a ball, which is then removed with the aid of a cheesecloth, hung on a hook and formed into a lump, or else the pressed curds are placed by hand into moulds, which gives them their shape. Manual processing gives the lump cheese its characteristic elasticity,

shaping of cheese in moulds: small pieces (depending on the size of the mould) are cut from the prepared lump. These pieces are compressed by hand and placed into moulds (hearts, cockerels or other animals, hemispheres) and lightly pressed so as to obtain the particular shape. If two-part moulds are used, the procedure is the same, the cheese being compressed by hand and pressed into the mould so that it fills both parts of the mould. The mould is then closed,

the lump or shaped cheese is left to drain for about two hours. Lumps of cheese are hung on hooks and cheeses in moulds are placed on shelves to drain,

after draining, the cheese is transferred to a warm storage area, the ripening room, where the fermentation process takes place. Cheese shaped in cheesecloth is hung on a hook, and small shaped cheeses are removed from their moulds and left to ripen on wooden shelves designed in such a way as to allow whey to drain off,

the temperature of the room during fermentation must not fall below 18-22 °C. The cheese ferments for two to three days under such conditions. The temperature during fermentation is monitored,

lumps of cheese are then cut into pieces and placed in a cold brine solution for 1-10 hours (depending on their weight). Once salted, the cheese takes on a solid and firm consistency. The brine solution (10-15 % salt concentration) is prepared by boiling drinking water with salt. Cheese shaped in moulds is salted in a similar manner,

after salting, the cheese is removed from the solution and placed on wooden shelves to dry and to drain off residual brine solution,

this is followed by smoking: the cheese is placed on wooden or stainless steel grids (or hung on holders made from bast) and cold-smoked with hardwood smoke which must not contain ash or dust. The cheese is smoked until it is pale brown with a hint of light chestnut colour, which takes 12, 16 or as much as 24 hours,

once smoked, the cheese is placed on wooden shelves in a cold store-room where the temperature is 13-15 °C,

after packaging, it is prepared for dispatch and sale.

3.7. Specific character of the agricultural product or foodstuff:

1. This is a product which has been produced for decades, even centuries, the cheese being smoked to extend the life of the product until winter, when cheese was not made.

2. The specific character is determined by the quality of the milk produced in mountain and foothill areas (grazing of sheep on mountain and foothill pastures, feeding with feed obtained from grasslands in mountain and foothill areas).

3. The product has a typical odour and taste (a smoky aroma and a mild, slightly acidic taste).

4. The product is made by hand, using traditional techniques (manual processing of curds).

5. Various moulds (some wooden) are used to shape the cheese during production (hearts, cockerels and other animals, hemispheres), and the product thus takes on specific shapes.
6. The product is made in a shepherd's hut (salaš), not industrially, with the possibility of also using wooden appliances, instruments and devices (e.g. a wooden vessel (putera), wooden mixers and wood moulds).

7. The product is smoked using hardwood smoke produced by a fire.

3.8. **Traditional character of the agricultural product or foodstuff:**

The 'salašnícky' element of the cheese's name is derived from the traditional production site, which was a shepherd's hut (salaš). Its traditional character stems from its traditional composition, production method and processing.

As stated by P. H ruba in the book entitled 'Zázrivá', small-scale highland sheep-farming in Zázrivá was focused on the production of sheep's milk, which was always processed in the shepherd's home (salaš), where sheep's milk lump cheese was offered as a delicacy to people visiting the shepherd. (Martin: Osveta, 1988).

Traditional 'ovčí hrudkový syr salašnícky' was produced from fresh sheep's milk by curdling it in a vessel (putera) with the aid of natural rennet (kľag) at an average temperature (32 °C) for 10-30 minutes. The coagulated milk was first shaken, then left to settle, and finally the curds were placed into a cheesecloth and pressed into a compact lump. The curd-filled cheesecloth was hung on a cleat, where it was left for the whey to drain off.

After draining, the lump of cheese was removed from the cloth and placed upside down onto a wooden shelf (podisiar), where it was left for several days to dry and ripen. Once they had ripened, the lumps of cheese were taken from the shepherd's hut to the home of the people who owned the sheep (Podolák Ján: Slovenský národopis 25, 1977).

In the 20th century, the production of 'ovčí hrudkový syr salašnícky' and 'ovčí salašnícky údený syr' spread throughout the mountainous areas of Slovakia where sheep were reared.

Sheep's milk lump cheese was one of the dairy products of traditional Wallachian sheep-farming, and its production was the main reason for sheep rearing in the mountainous regions of Slovakia. As a culinary speciality, it was used fresh (succulent — sweet) or fermented or dried, or preserved by smoking, i.e. smoked (Podolák Ján: Slovenský národopis 25, 1977).

In an article entitled 'Z histórie Ovčieho mliekárstva na Slovensku', Prokop wrote as follows: 'Wallachian culture is still kept alive in these parts by the carving skills of our shepherds; its influences are still to be seen in exquisitely carved bowls (črpáky) which shepherds used and in moulds (hearts, ducks, etc.) for oštiepok cheese and similar products.' (Čítanie o správnej výžive 1970, Slovenská spoločnosť pre racionálnu výživu, Bratislava, 1969). Heart- or duck-shaped moulds are used for 'ovčí salašnícky údený syr'.

Dr Ján Balko, the author of 'Bryndziarsky priemysel na Slovensku', published by Osveta in 1968, wrote as follows: 'We have no precise evidence showing who produced the first sheep's milk lump cheese here, or when they did so. However, we can safely assume that it was many centuries ago as, until 1914, the keeping of sheep for milk did not differ that much from the farming practices that existed at the time of the migration of the peoples.'

A passage from 'Druhy najznámejších slovenských syrov' reads as follows: 'Of greatest renown here and abroad are our cheese specialities made from sheep's milk, and these specialities also include "ovčí salašnícky údený syr"'. (1992).

The name and traditional production method of 'ovčí hrudkový syr salašnícky' and 'ovčí salašnícky údený syr' were also used by shepherds from the municipality of Prieched, who worked in shepherd's huts in the 1960s and 1970s in the Turiec region (Lamper and Ivanič, shepherds from Prieched).

P. Jasenský, a shepherd from Dolná Jaseň recalls: "Ovčí hrudkový syr — salašnícky" and "ovčí salašnícky údený syr" have been made since time immemorial, but only in small quantities, and they were used for direct consumption in shepherd's huts or were, and are, sold to people visiting shepherd's huts. They are traditional delicacies enjoyed by Slovaks living in mountain and foothill regions.' (Prehlásenie pána Jasenského, 1999).
3.9. Minimum requirements and procedures to check the specific character:

Checks include:

— the raw materials used — fresh, raw milk from grazing sheep and sheep fed with feed from mountain and foothill pastures. Checking is carried out in the form of visual checks during milking and on the basis of milking records,

— production in shepherd’s huts and the seasonality of production (April to September),

— during the technological process, the temperature of the milk prior to curdling and the processing of the curds by hand. The shape of the cheese is checked visually after the lump has been formed. The ambient temperature in the storage area is monitored during fermentation. Checks are carried out on the basis of records of the temperature during fermentation,

— the use of hardwood for smoking (beech, oak, etc.). Checks are carried out on the basis of records of the smoking process,

— physical indicators of the finished product: shape and weight. Checks are carried out visually and by weighing,

— chemical indicators of the finished product: dry matter content, fat content in dry matter, NaCl content. The values must correspond to those specified under point 3.5 in the specification. The checks are performed by means of laboratory analyses,

— organoleptic properties of the finished product: external appearance and colour, appearance and colour in cross-section, smell and taste, consistency. The organoleptic properties are checked after the technological process of cheese-making has been completed. Checks are carried out by means of a sensory analysis of the finished product,

— use of implements, which is subject to approval of the operation of the shepherd’s hut (wooden appliances and devices).

Checks by the authority or body verifying compliance with the product specification are performed once a year.

3.10. Authorities or bodies verifying compliance with the product specification:

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3.11. Name and address:

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Public □ Private

3.12. Specific tasks of the authority or body:

The specified inspection body is responsible for monitoring the specification in its entirety.

4. Annexes:

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