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

(2010/C 38/09)

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 from the date of this publication.

SINGLE DOCUMENT

COUNCIL REGULATION (EC) No 510/2006
‘PORC DE FRANCHE-COMTÉ’
EC No: FR-PGI-005-0504-04.11.2005
PGI (X) PDO ( )

1. Name:
   ‘Porc de Franche-Comté’

2. Member state or third country:
   France

3. Description of the agricultural product or foodstuff:

   3.1. Type of product:
   Class 1.1 Fresh meat (and offal)

   3.2. Description of the product to which the name in (1) applies:
   ‘Porc de Franche-Comté’ is the refrigerated fresh meat of pigs fed on whey, slaughtered at a minimum age of 182 days (the average age on slaughter is between 190 and 200 days) and with a minimum warm carcass weight of 75 kg (with no upper weight limit).

   The animals fattened are females and castrated males selected according to the following genetic criteria:

   — the breeding sows of the piglets being fattened must not have the halothane sensitivity gene,

   — the boars used at the final stage produce high-quality, rosé-coloured, homogenous meat,

   — the proportion of fattening pigs sensitive to halothane is less than 3 % and none carry the RN-allele.

   At all levels (carcasses, cuts and pieces for sale to the consumer) ‘Porc de Franche-Comté’ is selected to ensure that there are no meat blemishes (hair removal blemishes, split rind, burst blood vessels, bruising, fractures or foreign matter). The meat is also selected on the basis of colour (dark and pale colours are excluded) and the quality of the body fat, which must be white and firm (meat with soft and oily body fat is not used). Lastly, meat quality is also ensured by sorting according to ultimate pH.

3.3. Feed (for products of animal origin only):
The feed for ‘Porc de Franche-Comté’ is based on whey, a by-product of cheese-making. It must make up between 15 and 35 % of the dry matter in the diet and may be in raw, concentrated or dry form.

Adding complementary feed, consisting mainly of cereals and cereal products, to the whey enables the pigs' nutritional needs to be met: the complementary feed is made up of at least 50 % of cereals and miller's offals, which in turn must consist of at least 25 % of cereals, and plant proteins with well-balanced amino acids. Linoleic acid inputs, which may lead to poorer fat quality, are also controlled and are limited to 1.7 % of the overall diet.

3.4. Specific rules concerning slicing, grating, packaging, etc.:
‘Porc de Franche-Comté’ is sold fresh and refrigerated, packed or unpacked, in the following forms:

— carcasses,
— primary cuts,
— secondary cuts.

3.5. Specific rules concerning labelling:
The labelling of the product must contain the following information:

Name under which the product is sold: ‘Porc de Franche-Comté’.

4. Concise definition of the geographical area:
‘Porc de Franche-Comté’ is born, fattened and slaughtered exclusively in the region of Franche-Comté, covering the departments of Doubs (25), Jura (39), Haute-Saône (70) and Territoire de Belfort (90).

Slaughtering in the geographical area limits the stress placed on the animals as a result of transport, thus ensuring maximum technological meat quality.

5. Link with the geographical area:
5.1. Specificity of the geographical area:
Franche-Comté stretches from the Rhône to the Rhine and is bounded by two mountain ranges which give it its shape: the Jura Mountains to the east and the Vosges Mountains to the north. In the west, the countryside is made up of lowland plains through which the region’s two main watercourses flow: the Saône and the Doubs, rising to two plateaus towards the Jura in the east.

Agriculture in the Franche-Comté region has played a major role in shaping the landscape and is geared mainly towards cattle farming, with particular focus on dairy production. The region has a very well-developed cheese-making industry with ‘appellation d’origine contrôlée’ status. There are a large number of ‘fruitières’ (as the cheese dairies are known locally) scattered throughout the area.

These dairies produce whey, a choice raw material for animal feed because it is low in fat and unsaturated fatty acids but relatively rich in lysine and threonine (essential amino acids for certain animal species). It is therefore the development of the cheese dairies (which, due to their small size, make use of whey on site without it being transported or refrigerated) that has enabled whey-based pig rearing to develop in the Franche-Comté region.

The produce of this local pig farming is sold mainly within the region. ‘Porc de Franche-Comté’ is sold in the form of fresh meat but also as a raw material for cured meat product manufacturers.
5.2. Specificity of the product:

A combination of qualities specific to ‘Porc de Franche-Comté’:

‘Porc de Franche-Comté’ has qualities valued by pork butchers, i.e. its carcass quality and processability:

— meat with a very good structure, colour and texture,

— no exudate, either in stored muscles or in pre-cut pieces,

— the qualities found in cooked products: tender cutlets, firm, juicy hams with a clean and very appetising aroma, firm, white fat.

The quality of ‘Porc de Franche-Comté’ meat is the result of various factors: genetics, the transport and slaughtering conditions, the feed used, and the age and weight of the animals on slaughter.

Quality and genetics:

The animals used for ‘Porc de Franche-Comté’, which are castrated males and females not used for reproduction (to avoid the risk of the unpleasant aroma associated with meat from uncastrated males), are selected on the basis of two major genes affecting technological quality: the halothane gene (HAL), i.e. the stress-sensitivity gene causing the PSE (pale, soft, exudative) syndrome, and the RN- allele of the RN gene (the acid-meat gene).

Quality and rearing conditions:

Over and above the animals’ genetics, the PGI ‘Porc de Franche-Comté’ rests on special rearing conditions (whey feed and long rearing period) in the Franche-Comté region, which have an impact on the quality of the meat produced.

Thus, it has been shown that the high-energy diet resulting from the use of whey improves the quality of the meat due to the slower growth and greater age of the animals on slaughter, producing more mature meat. Also, the whey improves the quality of the pigs’ body fat.

It has also been shown that a higher slaughter age (above 182 days in the case of ‘Porc de Franche-Comté’) and a higher carcass weight (above 75 kg in the case of ‘Porc de Franche-Comté’) improve meat quality, in particular its firmness and the thickness of the backfat. The carcass weight and age on slaughter, together with the pigs’ special feed, also improve the organoleptic quality of the fat. The pigs’ unsaturated lipids decline with increasing age and weight.

The quality of ‘Porc de Franche-Comté’ meat is also improved by the transport and slaughtering conditions, which reduce the stress placed on the animals.

Lastly, the feed used for ‘Porc de Franche-Comté’ reduces the levels of unsaturated fatty acids in the meat, thus helping to improve the organoleptic qualities of the meat and products made from it. Unsaturated fatty acid peroxidation may lead to orange colouring of the cover fat of dried hams and impair meat flavour as a result of the production of ketones and aldehydes, leading to the development of a rancid odour. These methods reduce the levels of unsaturated lipids in the meat, thus giving it positive visual and olfactory qualities.
A long-standing reputation:

In the 19th century, fattening pigs using whey from local cheese dairies began to be developed and became a speciality of Franche-Comté agriculture.

The link between cheese and pig production has continued to the present day and pig farms in the region are still closely linked to the various Franche-Comté AOC products (Comté, Morbier, Mont d’Or and Bleu de Gex). Pig farms thus provide a means of recycling cheese dairy whey and also produce organic soil conditioner for dairy farms for fertilising their pastureland. This is a local economic system in which the two sectors are interdependent.

At present ‘Porc de Franche-Comté’ meat targets the needs of a regional market, both as fresh meat for consumers and as a raw material for processors.

5.3. Causal link between the geographical area and the quality or characteristics of the product (for PDO) or a specific quality, the reputation or other characteristic of the product (for PGI):

Pig production in Franche-Comté developed side-by-side with local cheese dairies.

It was the special nature of dairy production and processing in Franche-Comté that led to the development of pig production in the region: the small size of the regions’ cheese dairies makes it more convenient to use the whey on the spot, without transport or refrigeration, which explains why Franche-Comté is still the only region in France in which whey is used as a major ingredient in pig feed.

Of the almost 1 000 million litres of milk processed in the approximately 180 regional cheese dairies, producing about 850 million litres of whey, it is estimated that about one quarter is currently being used by the pig farming sector.

These special features have gone hand in hand with the development of special farming systems such as the installation of milk pipelines between cheese dairies and pig farms to avoid having to transport the whey by tanker, and the exchange of slurry between pig farmers and members of the dairy cooperatives who use it to fertilise their grassland.

Lastly, since the 1980s, a large number of investments have been made on regional farms to match the use of whey to the requirements of modern pig production, and almost two thirds of pig fattening places in Franche-Comté currently use whey (approximately 70 000 places or 190 000 pigs per year). Pig farms that use whey and milk processing plants also have the same distribution pattern.

Thus a firm link has been established in Franche-Comté between pig production and cheese production and the availability of the whey produced. The feeding method which has developed, using whey for fattening pigs together with longer rearing (older and heavier animals, etc.) is thus directly linked to Franche-Comté and produces the special features of ‘Porc de Franche-Comté’, i.e. meat of a good texture with low exudation, of a good colour, and with firm, white fat. The meat has a very good reputation among Franche-Comté consumers, who prize its quality and are highly attached to its local origin.

Reference to publication of the specification:

(Article 5(7) of Regulation (EC) No 510/2006)