OTHER ACTS

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Publication of an amendment 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 212/07)

This publication confers the right to object to the amendment 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.

AMENDMENT APPLICATION

COUNCIL REGULATION (EC) No 510/2006

Amendment application according to Article 9

‘MONTASIO’

EC No: IT-PDO-0217-0012-10.03.2006

PGI ( ) PDO ( X )

1. Heading in the product specification affected by the amendment:
   — □ Name of product
   — □ Description of product
   — □ Geographical area
   — □ Proof of origin
   — X Method of production
   — □ Link
   — X Labelling
   — □ National requirements
   — □ Others ( )

2. Type of amendment(s):
   — □ Amendment to Single Document or Summary Sheet
   — X Amendment to Specification of registered PDO or PGI for which neither the Single Document nor the Summary Sheet has been published

3. **Amendment(s):**

3.1. **Method of production:**

The possibility has been introduced of using milk from four milkings.

The lack of appropriate means of storing the milk, particularly in the summer months, has led farms to introduce cooling systems to conserve it and improve quality.

Virtually all the farms now have this equipment and as a result the milk delivered to the cheese dairies has undergone cooling, normally to the storage temperatures of between +4 °C and +8 °C provided for in the current production rules. The introduction of automatic cooling systems and the quality improvements mean that operators can now use milk from four consecutive milkings and save considerable amounts of time and money as a result.

The following sentence has been inserted: ‘As regards bacterial content (per ml) at 30 °C and the somatic cell count (per ml), the milk used must meet the requirements of Regulation (EC) No 853/2004 of 29 April 2004’. That Regulation superseded and replaced Directive 92/46/EEC, transposed by Section IV of Annex A to Decree of the President of the Republic No 54 of 14 December 1997 and subsequently repealed.

The restriction implied by the words ‘in the cheese dairy’ has been removed as unnecessary and misleading, given that maturing can also take place in, and otherwise involve, recognised cheese maturing facilities and not only the places of production (cheese dairies) themselves.

The temperatures for heating the milk and the curd have been changed as experience over the years, particularly with checks by the outside body, has shown that the suggested range was too narrow, due on the one hand to differences in readings from instruments in the dairies (hand-held or mechanical thermometers) and the precision devices used by inspectors. Different heat transfer rates (steam-copper, steam-steel) and the knock-on effect were further reasons to broaden the two temperature ranges. Broadening the range has no particular technical impact in the case of the temperatures at which the rennet is added, but as regards heating the curd it helps, given that the ‘regulation’ milk has a low bacteria count, in stimulating the growth of the thermophilic lactic bacteria that are present.

A minimum temperature has been introduced for the first 60 days of maturing on the basis of the finding in a study by the Montasio cheese consortium and the Thiene dairy research institute that biochemical aspects of cheese production are slowed down if temperatures are too low, and this also prevents the loss of moisture that gives ‘Montasio’ cheese its particular character. A minimum temperature of +8 °C can be used up to the 30th day of maturing, after which the temperature must be raised for the reasons given above. Prohibiting temperatures of over 12 °C has little impact given that the minimum maturation period remains the same.

The figure for the moisture level on the 10th day of maturing has been changed slightly as it was considered necessary to introduce a 2 % tolerance for analyses between the 10th and 60th days of maturing to allow for minor divergences in instrument readings. Also amended are some parameters relating to the cheese’s characteristics when put up for consumption after 60 days of maturing, such as...
maximum moisture level (always within 2 %) and unit weight and diameter (now more restrictive). The correction concerns the introduction of the 2 % tolerance in line with what applies to the maximum moisture level on the 60th day of maturing. The weight range has been narrowed so that produce adheres more closely to the standard commercial weight; also, requirements as to diameter have been made more precise, reflecting the fact that the cheese on the market never has a diameter of more than 35 cm.

As cheese is an organic product and yields, weight loss, etc. are extremely dependent on the raw materials (primarily the milk), weather conditions, etc., rather than artificially broadening the analytical parameters, it was considered scientifically and technically more correct to provide for a longer maturation period to allow for the water loss necessary to meet the parameters for the 60th day of maturing. Cheese that exceeds the required moisture level on the 10th day of maturing can in no event be marketed before the 60th day and on the 60th day it must be analysed to see whether it has lost enough weight during maturing to make up for the earlier higher level. If the requirement is not met, the batch in question cannot bear the origin label ('de-branding'). Similarly, cheese that has not reached the required moisture level on the 60th day of maturing will undergo a further check on the 90th day before receiving the 'Montasio' designation. Again, if the requirement is not met, the batch in question cannot bear the origin label.

A suitable provision has been inserted to the effect that the cheese can be cut into portions and prepackaged only after the minimum 60-day maturation period.

3.2. Labelling:

More detail has been added to the part relating to the designation and presentation of the product when put up for consumption. This change was necessary to provide the consumer with more specific and accurate information.

The possibility has been granted of clearly identifying 'Montasio' PDO cheese as a prodotto della montagna (mountain product), by the placing on the 'heel' of a small label with the letters 'PDM', provided that the whole production cycle (including the minimum 60 days of maturing) has taken place in parts of the PDO production area that qualify as mountainous under the national legislation in force.

SUMMARY
COUNCIL REGULATION (EC) No 510/2006
'MONTASIO'
EC No: IT-PDO-0217-0012-10.03.2006
PDO ( X ) PGI ( )

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

1. Responsible department in the Member State:

Name: Ministero delle politiche agricole alimentari e forestali
Address: Via XX Settembre 20
00187 Roma RM
ITALIA
Tel. +39 0646655104
Fax +39 064665306
E-mail: saco7@politicheagricole.gov.it
2. **Group:**

Name: Consorzio per la tutela del formaggio Montasio  
Address: Vicolo Resia ½  
33030 Codroipo UD  
ITALIA  
Tel. +39 0432905317  
Fax +39 0432912052  
E-mail: info@formaggiomontasio.net  
Composition: Producers/processors (X) Others ()

3. **Type of product:**

Class 1.3 — Cheese

4. **Specification:**

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

4.1. **Name:**

'Montasio'

4.2. **Description:**

Cheese made from cow's milk, matured for a medium to long period, cylindrical in form with a straight or almost straight heel and flat or slightly convex sides. 'Montasio' cheese is made from unpasteurised milk using only natural lactic bacteria or authorised starter cultures; it must be matured for at least 60 days and the moisture content is checked on the basis of samples after 10 and after 60 days of maturing. The milk comes mainly from Bruno alpina, Pezzata Rossa Italiana and Pezzata Nera cattle.

Apart from cereals (in particular maize and barley), the cattle are fed on green and dried fodder (polyphites and alfalfa) and silage (mainly from maize). These products make up about 80-85% of the total diet and come mainly from the production area. The concentrates and nucleus proteins are supplied by feed manufacturers generally based in the production area who use mainly local cereals and buy in protein meal (e.g. soya and alfalfa, also produced on site) and mineral and vitamin supplements.

After 60 days of maturing, 'Montasio' PDO cheese must present the following characteristics: moisture content of no more than 36.72%; fat content over dry matter: 40% minimum; weight: 6-8 kg; diameter: 30-35 cm; heel: 8 cm maximum; rind: smooth, regular and elastic; consistency: compact with some eye-holes; colour: natural, slightly straw-coloured; aroma: distinctive; taste: piquant and pleasant.

4.3. **Geographical area:**

The production area for 'Montasio' PDO cheese consists of: Friuli-Venezia Giulia — the whole region; Veneto — the whole of the provinces of Belluno and Treviso and part of the provinces of Padua and Venice, as follows: along the boundary of the province of Padua from where it intersects with that of the province of Treviso to the Serenissima motorway, continuing to the motorway bridge over the Brenta river and then along the river to its mouth.

4.4. **Proof of origin:**

Each stage in the production process is monitored, with all inputs and outputs being documented. This monitoring, along with the fact that the inspection body maintains special lists of all participants in the process and receives regular production reports, ensures the traceability of the product. All those registered in the relevant lists, be they legal or natural persons, are subject to checks by the inspection body.
The production chain is made up of holdings that are recognised, identified and inspected on the basis of sampling. Daily monitoring of the collection of the milk for 'Montasio' PDO cheese takes the form of inspection and approval of the vehicles used to transport it, operators’ collection tanks and heat-treatment systems (the milk must not be pasteurised). The final product is immediately identifiable from label bands showing the producer’s reference code and the year, month and day of production. All entries regarding the production of 'Montasio' are suitably documented on paper and, where possible, in electronic form online.

The premises of the milk producers, cheese dairies and maturing facilities must be located within the production area.

4.5. Method of production:

The production and processing of the milk, and maturing and labelling of the cheese must take place in the area described in point 4.3.

After the milk has been coagulated with calf’s rennet, the curd is stirred to a paste with small lumps the size of grains of rice which is then heated, salted and matured for a medium to long period. 'Montasio' cheese must be matured for a minimum of 60 days, at temperatures of at least 8 °C for the first 30 days and higher for the remainder of the period.

All movements of batches of 'Montasio' cheese that have been matured for less than 60 days are recorded by the cheese dairy or maturing facility, either on paper or in electronic form online.

4.6. Link:

The natural factors are those linked to the climate in the production area, which consists largely of mountains and foothills where pasture and mountain pasture are still practised, contributing in turn to the quality of the cows’ fodder.

'Montasio' cheese appears in price lists from San Daniele and Udine from 1773 and 1775, which shows that it was traded and thus produced not merely locally or for own consumption. Also, in price comparisons, there are far more references to ‘Montasio’ than to other similar cheeses produced in neighbouring areas. Apart from its flavour, this is no doubt due to its main characteristic, the fact that it is a cheese that keeps over time and matures, and can therefore be exchanged and traded. The product’s strong link with the production area is shown by the extent to which it has stimulated the growth of production cooperatives. The first cooperative approach started up around 1880 in Cadore, also in the cheese sector, with the dairy cooperatives that soon spread throughout Friuli and Veneto and around 1915 (at the outbreak of World War I) there were an impressive 350 or so cooperatives in the region producing and marketing ‘Montasio’ cheese.

Another link with the production area is the establishment in 1925 in Friuli-Venezia Giulia of a college for cheese making which at the time prepared cheese makers for work in the eastern Veneto region and Friuli-Venezia Giulia. In the 1920s the production area was already identical to that to be documented later.

'Montasio’ cheese and the particular technique for producing it spread quickly in Friuli and eastern Veneto, not only because of human factors and the equipment used (the new dairy cooperatives or the foundation of the cheese-making college), and by the 1960s there were more than 650 active dairies. This growth would not have been so steady, however, in a less conducive environment than that in which the technique originally spread.

First, the eastern part of Italy is, and always has been, characterised by high rainfall in the spring and autumn, and this has nurtured the spread of the grassland and cereal (wheat and barley) cultivation that provide the cattle’s basic diet. A further important factor is the development of maize as a crop and its use in fresh feed and silage. In the past few years, the growing of soya as a protein supplement has also become a typical feature of the production area.
There is no doubt that microbiological characteristics of the local environment have favoured the development and spread of 'Montasio' cheese production. The product is characterised by the presence of a thermophilic microbial flora which has always made it unique among cheeses in that it can be consumed fresh (nowadays after a minimum of two months, but a few decades ago from one month only) but also, after 36 months or more of maturing, it does not go off but its organoleptic characteristics, flavour and odour change over time thanks to the bacteria naturally present in the pastures of the production area.

This is even more clear if we compare 'Montasio' with other mountain cheeses from nearby, for which history, tradition and environmental characteristics have led to different production methods being developed according to the type of cheese to be produced: fresh or 6/8 months old.

With improvements in animal husbandry, more efficient crop-growing and the introduction of increasingly hygienic milking techniques, it was felt necessary to enrich the milk only with those microorganisms that are helpful for producing 'Montasio', as a result of which the use of lactic starter cultures (rich in coccus but not rod-shaped bacteria) from milk from the production area has been trialled and spread, while in neighbouring areas producers use whey starters (rich in rod-shaped bacteria).

4.7. Inspection body:
Name: CSQA Certificazioni srl
Address: Via San Gaetano 74
36016 Thiene VI
ITALIA
Tel. +39 0445313011
Fax +39 0445313070
E-mail: csqa@csqa.it

4.8. Labelling:
The product is identified from the time of production by markings on individual bands bearing the cheese dairy's reference code, the two-letter code for the province and the date of production. The 'Montasio' PDO origin mark consists of diagonal lines with the word 'Montasio' the right way up and upside-down (see Fig. 1).

This origin mark appears on all 'Montasio' cheese, whether or not the producers are members of the consortium, provided the production rules have been followed.

Fig. 1

1. Hot-branding of the word ‘Montasio’ and label with the letters ‘PDM’
2. Month of production
3. Day of production
4. Cheese dairy’s reference code
5. Province code
6. Year of production

The logo for the designation consists of a stylised capital M below which appears the word ‘Montasio’.
Where the entire production process, from production of the milk to the minimum 60-day maturation period, takes place in parts of the PDO production area that qualify as mountainous under the national legislation in force, the term ‘prodotto della montagna’ may be used in the labelling. In these cases, a label with the letters ‘PDM’ (the acronym for prodotto della montagna) is printed on the heel of the cheese.

At the request of any producer (whether or not a member), the consortium may, after inspecting ‘Montasio’ PDO cheese that has been matured for over 100 days, hot-brand it on the heel with the PDO logo (see Fig. 2).