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
(2012/C 101/04)

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.

SINGLE DOCUMENT
COUNCIL REGULATION (EC) No 510/2006
‘QUESO CAMERANO’
EC No: ES-PDO-0005-0767-19.03.2009
PGI ( ) PDO ( X )

1. Name:
‘Queso Camarano’

2. Member State or third Country:
Spain

3. Description of the agricultural product or foodstuff:

3.1. Type of product:
Class 1.3. Cheeses

3.2. Description of product to which the name in point 1 applies:

Camerano cheese is compact and firm and has almost no fissures or holes. It is white or slightly marbled in colour throughout when cut, with a smooth surface and few cracks, supple and resistant to handling. The cheese is made with goat’s milk by means of enzymatic coagulation of natural rennet of goat origin, weighing between 200 and 1 200 grams. It is small in size and has a minimum 35 % fat content as a proportion of its solid content. It is cylindrical and cake-shaped with smooth top and bottom surfaces and convex sides. The outermost part of its surface is marked by the ‘cilla’, or plaited cane mould. The cheese is uncomplicated and fresh, the product of a poor and somewhat peripheral economy. It retains the spontaneity of wild plants and flowers and fresh air.

Camerano cheese is a soft cheese drained naturally by force of gravity and is sometimes aged. Before the ageing process begins, the cheese can be categorised as follows:

— Fresh Camerano cheese: May be consumed when production is complete.

— Soft Camerano cheese: Following production, requires a minimum of 15 days of ageing.

— Semi-cured Camerano cheese: Following production, requires a minimum of 30 days of ageing.

— Cured Camerano cheese: Following production, requires a minimum of 75 days of ageing.

Depending on the length of the ageing, the consistency of the cheese varies from soft to semi-soft and there is no rind in the case of the fresh and soft versions. In the case of semi-cured and cured Camerano cheese, the consistency varies from semi-hard to hard and there is a clearly defined rind and a certain degree of mould.

3.3. Raw materials (for processed products only):
All the milk used to make Camerano cheese will come from a defined geographical area and be the product of milking healthy goats of the serrano, Murciano-Granadino, Malagueño and alpine breeds, plus their cross-breeds. The milk will comply with applicable hygiene and health rules and also be:

— Clean and free of impurities; and
— Free of colostrums, medicated feedingstuffs and preservatives.

The composition of the milk produced on the farms will be as follows:

— Protein: minimum 3.3 per cent
— Fat: minimum 4 per cent
— Total solid content: minimum 13 per cent
— Maximum acidity (when it enters the cheese factory): 15 °Dornic.
— pH: 6.5 as a minimum

The rennet used for the enzymatic coagulation is natural and of goat origin.

Fresh, soft and semi-cured Camerano cheese is made from pasteurised milk; cured Camerano cheese can be made from either untreated or pasteurised milk.

3.4. Feed (for products of animal origin only):
The goats will feed on natural vegetation, principally shrubs; this gives the cheese its particular sensory properties. They will go to pasture every day throughout the year and benefit from extensive pastureland, weather permitting, except during breeding season, when female goats stay close to their kids.

A number of by-products are also used throughout the year, especially cereal straw, grapes, olive tree branches, almond shells, stubble from orchards, beetroot pulp, and waste from the canning industry within the defined geographical area, plus beans and peas and a supplement of high nutritional value, based on straw mixed with peas, oats, corn, runner beans, dried alfalfa and vetch. As far as possible, the cereal will be grown by the farmers themselves and the supplement will come from the defined geographical area. Under normal climatic conditions, grazing on extensive pastureland and feeding on by-products makes up around 80 % of the animal's daily intake.

3.5. Specific steps in production that must take place in the defined geographical area:
The goats are milked and the cooling, storage, collection and transport of the milk, together with the production, ageing and storage of the cheese, are carried out in a fully controlled manner in registered establishments located within the defined geographical area.
There is a specific, longstanding method for making Camerano cheese which is basically the production of fresh goat's cheese that may be aged to a varying degree.

Goat's milk is the principal raw material used in making Camerano cheese since originally it was a feature of their subsistence economy that families living in the mountains had a goat or two to provide them with milk. Any milk left over was turned into cheese.

The production of Camerano cheese has not changed in any significant way compared to these origins. The only new techniques that have been introduced are to improve the systems of production in order to increase the output of high-quality cheese with optimal safety guarantees.

Camerano cheese is a soft cheese whose curd is cut repeatedly but maintains a high moisture level. The curd is still obtained by means of enzymatic coagulation of natural rennet of animal, and specifically goat, origin.

Mechanical pressure methods are never used in the draining process as in the production of most cheeses, since after the cheese is cut it is placed in the mould, or 'cilla', which also gives it its final shape and size, imprinting its lattice effect across the surface of the cheese and preventing any type of external pressure from being applied.

The 'cilla' thus has the effect of making the cheese's own weight in the mould act as a press, which ensures that a slow and prolonged natural draining takes place by means of gravity; this allows the cheese which is initially soft progressively to take on a more compact shape.

Camerano cheese is usually eaten fresh but ageing is recommended to prolong its product life. When Camerano cheese ages, the ageing process begins when moisture levels are still high. This plays a direct role in boosting the lactic properties of the cheese and helps to break down proteins more effectively, which is not usually the case of other cheeses produced in Spain and Portugal.

If Camerano cheese is aged, the minimum ageing period is 15 days for soft cheese 30 days for semi-cured cheese, and 75 days for cured cheese. As the ageing process progresses, a rind forms on the outer surface of the cheese.

The cheese is also turned over and cleaned during the ageing. When the ageing process is a long one (more than 30 days), the outside of the cheese may be wiped down with olive oil. This limits the growth of mould on the rind, rather than being an ingredient in the cheese itself.

3.6. Specific rules concerning slicing, grating, packaging, etc.:

Soft, semi-cured and cured cheese with its natural rind can be packaged in shrink film, vacuum packed, or placed in a paper or cellophane bag. Fresh cheeses are packaged in tubs or thermoformed containers; the same packaging is possible for soft cheeses.

The cheese is always marketed as a single, complete piece.

3.7. Specific rules concerning labelling:

Camerano cheese carries the label approved by the Regulatory Board for the protected designation of origin 'Queso Camerano', which will be the sole label used by producers marketing cheese under the PDO. The wording in a larger font size will constitute the product's trademark. The caption 'D.O.P. QUESO CAMERANO' (PDO CAMERANO CHEESE) will follow in a font size 20 per cent smaller. The script used to identify the village, address, locality and province of the cheese producer will be no greater than 2 mm in size.

All the operators that comply with the terms of the product specifications may use the label approved by the Regulatory Board.
4. **Concise definition of the geographical area:**

The area that produces milk suitable for the production of cheese covered by the PDO is the same as the area in which the cheese is produced, aged and cured. This area comprises all the municipalities located in the districts of Rioja Alta, Sierra Rioja Alta, Sierra Rioja Media and Sierra de Rioja Baja, plus the following municipalities of the Rioja Media district: Daroca, Lagunilla de Jubera, Logroño, Ocón, Santa Engracia and Villamediana de Iregua; and of the Rioja Baja district: Aguilar del Río Alhama, Arnedo, Autol, Bergasa, Bergasillas, Cervera del Río Alhama, Grávalos, Herce, Igea, Pradejón, Quel, Santa Eulalia Bajera, Tudelilla, and Villarroya.

This area covers a total surface of 407,149 hectares of the 503,388 hectares that make up the Autonomous Community of La Rioja as a whole.

The limits of the protected geographical area are based on the location of the herds of goats; the origin of the method of producing Camerano cheese; and the diversity and wealth of its natural, wooded pastureland, agricultural by-products and stubble fields.

5. **Link with the geographical area:**

5.1. **Specificity of the geographical area:**

Although La Rioja is situated in northern Spain, its climate is markedly Mediterranean. It is sandwiched between the Cantabrian mountains, which protect it from the moist winds that blow in from the north, and the Iberian System.

The Sierra de Cameros (Cameranos mountains) is located in the south of La Rioja. This is where Camerano cheese was born; it is currently one of La Rioja’s most deprived rural areas. The climate of the Sierra de Cameros is still marked by infrequent and irregular rainfall; consistently low temperatures in winter and high temperatures in summer; short springs and autumns; and frequent late frosts.

This was formerly an area with abundant free-range herds of goats that grazed across the valleys and the hill country as described by Enric Canut in his ‘Manual de Quesos, Queseros y Quesómanos’ (1988) (‘A manual of cheese, cheese-makers and cheese-lovers’). According to the eighteenth-century Catastro de Ensenada (land registry), there were goat herds in the Ebro Valley, in Logroño and in Haro.

The pedological characteristics of the defined geographical area also permit the growth of a great wealth of vegetation and natural pastures; for the most part these are brown soils covered by woodland or brown topsoil, resting on either paleozoic slate in the Demanda mountains, or on sandstone dating from the Triassic period. Most of these are well suited to planting trees or at the least to dense scrub with a wide variety of organic matter in the topsoil, although others favour Calluna vulgaris and Ericas.

Spontaneous vegetation comprises patches of common and upland gorse, thyme, rosemary, bramble, hawthorn, brooms, heather, briars, juniper, and many others, together with what is left after harvesting and agricultural waste produced in the defined geographical area that are a natural supplement to the feed of goat herds. Taken together, these give the cheese a full, rounded taste.

The soil and climate give the area a wealth of natural herbaceous and wooded pastureland that has a great feed value. It gives the milk its characteristic fat content, protein, sugar and mineral salts, and these have a direct impact on its taste which — thanks to the knowledge of cheese-making handed down and perfected through the generations — is fully passed on to the cheese.
The first people to make Camerano cheese were the farmers and other inhabitants of the area who had to adapt to the limits imposed by the environmental conditions and poor communications. They devised the system for making the cheese: their goal was to make use of surplus goat's milk, which was an important part of traditional life, customs and festivals in the mountains, by increasing its shelf life.

At the end of the 1960s and at the beginning of the 1970s there was a decline in the goat numbers and in cheese-making. This was a consequence of the flight from the mountains to the valley and a forestry policy that boosted the planting of new trees but had the effect of preventing the goats from entering woodland. Nevertheless, the custom of making craft-produced Camerano cheese with goat's milk from the farmer's own herd has been passed on successfully from generation to generation until this day thanks to family consumption and sale-to-order.

The human factor is thus the knowledge of the process of making Camerano cheese which has been passed on today to our master cheese-makers. They perfectly combine the methods of yesteryear with huge technological advances that mean that the cheese complies fully with health rules.

5.2. Specificity of the product:

Camerano cheese is a product made exclusively from goat's milk and originated in the southern uplands of La Rioja, known as the Sierra de Cameros, the place that gave it its name.

The fame of Camerano cheese goes back centuries. In the eleventh-century verse of Gonzalo de Berceo, the 'Vida de San Millán', the writer knows of the importance of cheese:

Unas tierras dan vino, en otras dan dineros,
En aguna Çevera, en alguantas cameros,
Fierro traen en Alava e cunnos de azeros,
Quesos dan en ofrendas por todos los camberos.

As part of the Euroterroirs project, funded by the European Union, which aims to boost Europe's gastronomic heritage, the Ministry for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAPA) published the 'Inventario Español de Productos Tradicionales de la Tierra' ('Spanish Inventory of Traditional Farm Produce') in which Camerano cheese appears on page 203.

Camerano cheese is also mentioned in MAPA's 'Spanish cheese catalogues' from 1973 and 1990; there have also been numerous references to the cheese in specialist literature on Camerano ethnography.

Pure goat's Camerano cheese also features on the 'Map of Spain's 100 best cheeses'.

Among other characteristics, Camerano cheese can be recognised and is set apart by its close texture and its cylindrical, cake-shaped form, smooth top and bottom surfaces and convex sides, and its small size. Its rind appears as though engraved in a lattice effect by the 'cilla', the name given to the cane mould used in yesteryear to make the cheese; for reasons of health and hygiene the 'cillas' are now made of plastic, although they have kept the same shape.

The longer the ageing process lasts, the stronger the smell and taste of the cheese are. Its taste varies from sweet and slightly acidic when it is not aged; slightly salty and with low levels of acidity in the case of cheeses which have undergone a short ageing process; to rather acidic, rather salty and slightly bitter in the case of cheeses that have aged for a long time.

When the cheese is tasted the aroma and flavours belonging to the following families may be experienced:

— animal, goat sub-family,
— plant, sub-family of wild grasses from the area where the goats graze and of the by-products from the area used for feed, and
— others include a faint taste of whey and natural storing places in fresh and soft cheeses; a musty taste in the case of semi-cured and cured cheeses.
When the cheese is smelled aromas belonging to the following families may be noted:

— lactic, intensely acidic lactic sub-family,

— plant, sub-family of cut grasses with a mix of wild grasses from the area where the goats graze,

— animal, goat sub-family, and

— animal, rennet sub-family,

— others include a faint smell of whey and natural storing places in fresh and soft cheeses; a musty aroma in the case of semi-cured and cured cheeses.

Depending on the cheese's age, the rind contains mould characteristic of the geographical area. It is just beginning to show in soft cheese, and brown or greenish-brown in semi-cured and cured cheese; this has an impact on the organoleptic qualities of the product by replacing the faint aroma of whey in the fresh or soft cheese with a similarly faint aroma of the storeroom or natural storing place.

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):

The goatherds of the Cameros mountains milked their goats wherever they happened to be and used the milk to make cheese in cane moulds known as 'cillas'. With the passing of time, Camerano cheese began to be produced in other parts of La Rioja. The reason for this was the practice of moving the goats from the mountains to the valleys and back in search of pasture.

Goats whose milk is used to make Camerano cheese graze in the protected geographical area and it is in this same area that master cheese-makers produce cheese in the same way that their ancestors did.

The aroma and plant and animal characteristics of Camerano cheese, set out in paragraph 5.2, Specificity of the product, as 'Plant, sub-family of cut grasses with a mix of wild grasses from the area where the goats graze, and animal, goat sub-family' is the result of the exclusive use of the milk of goats which essentially feed on the natural vegetation they find and the specific by-products of the defined geographical area. This establishes an unbroken link between the flora and fauna that are specific to the geographical area, and their direct impact on the sensory aspects of Camerano cheese.

This happens because the fat contained in the milk is impregnated with the smells of the plants that the goats have ingested as part of their feed. As a result, the milk takes on an aroma which is later passed on to the cheese, with the aromas strengthening as the ageing process is extended.

Moreover, the traditional method of making Camerano cheese has not changed very much and this means that the human factor also has a key role to play in the characteristics of the end product. Camerano cheese is produced as a soft cheese with high moisture levels and is sometimes aged, to a greater or lesser degree. This leads to an aroma and faint taste of whey in fresh and soft cheeses, which with ageing gradually takes on an aroma of natural storing places; it is musty in the case of semi-cured and cured cheeses due to the controlled presence of mould in the rind.

The method of enzymatic coagulation by natural rennet of goat origin is also a specific factor and has a direct impact not only on the consistency and texture of the curd that is formed but also on the animal, rennet sub-family, aroma.

Meanwhile the 'cilla' that is used as a mould is also a key part of the production process since it both gives the cheese its appearance and final shape and characteristics, and also prevents the drainage from being driven by any external pressure, ensuring that this essential stage in making the cheese is natural, slow and prolonged. This has a very close bearing on the quality of the consistency of the end product, which is very flexible and firm to the touch.
Since the cheese is drained naturally by force of gravity, it does not become excessively sticky. For this reason it is not possible to make large Camerano cheeses, another particularity of our cheese.

Thus the quality and differentiating characteristics of Camerano cheese are a consequence of its geographical origin and the climate and soils of the area, which determine the location, variety and diversity of the pastures that are at the basis of the goats' feed, but also a consequence of the human factor that has managed to pass down through time the foundations of the traditional method of production.

Reference to the publication of the specifications:
(Article 5(7) of Regulation (EC) No 510/2006)