

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 94/13)

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

'PIMIENTO DE GERNIKA' OR 'GERNIKAKO PIPERRA'

EC No: ES-PGI-0005-0673-31.08.2008

PGI (X) PDO ()

1. Title:

'Pimiento de Gernika' or 'Gernikako Piperra'

2. Member State or third country:

Spain

3. Description of the agricultural product or foodstuff:

3.1. Type of product:

Class 1.6. Fruit, vegetables and cereals, fresh or processed: pepper

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

'Gernikako Piperra' or 'Pimiento de Gernika' peppers protected by the protected geographic indication are fruits of the genus *Capsicum annuum* L., which belong to the local cultivar of the Gernika variety. They are intended for human consumption fresh as unripe peppers for frying. Within this local cultivar, different lines from the two that were entered into the Commercial Varieties Register with the names 'Derio' and 'Iker' have been selected. Any other line within this local cultivar that has the characteristics that define the 'Pimiento de Gernika' variety is also protected by the protected geographic indication.

'Pimiento de Gernika' is a sweet pepper containing little or no capsaicin and which in the environmental conditions of the Basque Country is not usually spicy. It has thin flesh (2 to 3 mm thick) and when cut lengthways has a medium to elongated triangle shape, which corresponds to types C3 and C1 of Pochard's classification (1966).

The pepper is mainly used for frying, for which the fresh flesh is taken in its unripened state. This has become the most popular method of consumption. The fruits are harvested when they are a uniform green all over and before having reached their final size. They are between 6 and 9 cm long, excluding the stalk, between 2 and 3 cm wide and weigh between 10 and 12 g. The colour tone varies from medium to dark green. They are narrow and long. When cut lengthways they are triangular and their cross-section is elliptical to triangular with two or three slightly pronounced lobes. The tip is pointed, the stalk is long and thin. The area where the stalk joins the fruit is usually flat or convex. The skin is thin and is not leathery, nor does it contain parchment. The peppers are smooth and look fresh. They contain seeds that are an off-white colour and are not completely formed.

The 'Gernika' variety is also known as 'pimiento choricero' and 'pimiento de Bizkaia'.

The majority of these peppers are consumed fresh, before reaching their final size.

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 93, 31.3.2006, p. 12.

3.3. *Specific steps in production that must take place in the identified geographical area:*

The peppers must have been produced and packed in the geographical area.

They must be planted in the open air or underneath a cover. They are produced using the most appropriate techniques for perfect development and fruiting. No products or systems that could harm the quality of the product may be used.

Open air planting is done in April and May and planting in greenhouses is done in February, March and April, meaning that the fruits can be harvested from June in the first case and from mid-April in the second case. They are planted at a density of 3-4 plants per square metre.

Any treatments must be minimal and necessary and biological pest control treatments and techniques should be used wherever possible.

In general terms, the specifications of the technical standard (*Producción Integrada para el Pimiento*) that is currently in force in the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country must be followed.

Most of the crop is harvested by hand between April and November. The harvest is staggered and as many runs are made as are required. It is done when the product is at the optimum stage of development and is done very carefully so as not to damage the fruit and to guarantee its physical properties.

3.4. *Special standards for slicing, grating, packing, etc.:*

The peppers are packed and packaged in the production area. Traditionally, the packing and packaging work is done on each individual plantation.

As the product is harvested when it is at an optimum stage of its development. It is harvested daily and packed the same day.

The requirement to pack and package the peppers in the same production area aims to protect the reputation of the protected geographical indication, guaranteeing the authenticity of the product and maintaining its quality and characteristics.

It is a fresh product with a short expiry date. It is not advisable to store the product in a refrigerator nor to transport the product or keep it any longer than necessary as this can have a negative impact on it.

Due to their special characteristics (sold fresh, thin skin and flesh, unripe), the peppers are very sensitive to sudden changes in temperature or humidity and age rapidly. Any handling or transport more than that which is strictly necessary for packaging them for the consumer could diminish the quality of the product.

3.5. *Specific rules on labelling:*

Labels that use the protected geographical indication 'Pimiento de Gernika' or 'Gernikako Piperra' and the information that is generally established by law must include the wording 'Pimiento de Gernika' or 'Gernikako Piperra' and its logo.



4. **Concise definition of the geographical area:**

The geographical area includes the provinces of Gipuzkoa and Bizkaia, and the following areas of Alava: the Cantábrica Alavesa area which includes the municipalities of Ayala, Okondo, Llodio, Amurrio and Artziniega and the area Estribaciones del Gorbea, municipalities of Urkabustaiz, Zuya, Zigoitia, Legutiano and Aramaio.

5. Link with the geographical area:

5.1. Specificity of the geographical area:

The geographical area suitable for producing these peppers is limited to the Atlantic coast of the Basque Country, which has a mesothermic climate characterised by moderate temperatures and much rain. There is not one dry month and most of the rain falls in autumn and winter. It is an Atlantic climate dominated by marine currents from the west to the east, which explains why the climate in this area is much cooler (average annual temperature of 13 °C and temperature variation of 11 °C) and more humid than could be expected for its latitude.

The optimal relative air humidity is between 60 and 75 %. Lower air humidity accompanied by periods of increased temperature and sunshine can lead to physiological problems, which diminish the marketable quality of the fruits as for example does the waterproof coating which sometimes appears (which reduces its value for its main use as a frying pepper).

If, on top of these environmental conditions, there is a lack of groundwater and high evapotranspiration, other physiological changes can occur that lower the quality of the fruits such as apical-blossom end rot and/or the appearance of some spicy fruits due to an increase in the capsaicin content.

The climate of the Basque Country fits perfectly the pepper's agroclimatic needs. The Atlantic coast of the Basque Country provides the pepper with the right temperature, which is moderate and not excessively hot and the security that there will be no frosts. Also the soil in the north of the Basque Country is characterised by its lime content and the abundance of organic material, which help the 'Pimiento de Gernika' to grow appropriately.

The limited geographical area's agroclimatic conditions give this pepper some of the individual quality characteristics that have made it famous whilst preventing or reducing the defects that devalue it such as hotness, a waterproof coating or apical-blossom end rot.

5.2. Specificity of the product:

'Pimiento de Gernika' or 'Gernikako Piperra' is a local cultivar that is perfectly adapted to the agroclimatic conditions of the Atlantic coast of the Basque Country.

The agroclimatic conditions in the production area give this pepper some of the individual characteristics such as the absence of hotness and the thinness of its flesh that have made it famous.

This type of pepper is demanding in terms of temperature. Temperatures below 15 °C slow its growth and at less than 10 °C it stops altogether. Temperatures above 35 °C can cause the blossom to fall and the fruits to ripen early. The optimal temperature for vegetative development and fruiting is 25/18 °C day/night. At 1 °C the plants suffer frost damage. For the plant to develop, the soil temperature must be above 12 °C and if it is to develop properly the average daily air temperature should reach 20 °C with just a slight diurnal variation.

Also, size is another of its particularities, although harvesting the pepper early ensures that its flesh is thin, that there is no parchment and that it has an agreeable taste.

This pepper is known for its extraordinary taste and great quality and is usually eaten fried as an aperitif, garnish or starter. It is one of the most typical items in the Basque cuisine.

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 link between the limited geographical area and the 'Pimiento de Gernika' or 'Gernikako Piperra' is based on its reputation and cultural practices dating back to antiquity, which among other aspects came about as a result of the pepper's great popularity among consumers in the Basque Country and its market value.

'Pimiento de Gernika' or 'Gernikako Piperra' is one of the oldest plants known in the Basque Country and its seeds and the secrets of its cultivation have been passed from father to son for centuries and form part of Bizkaia's history.

Great food critics from the Basque Country and the rest of Spain (Llona Larrauri, Busca Isusi, J.L. Iturrieta, J.J. Lapitz, José Castillo, Marquesa de Parebere or Ignacio Domenech) have praised this product in their articles or have included it in some of their recipes. World-famous Basque chefs such as Arguiñano or Subijana use this product in their recipes too.

The 'Cofradía del Gernikako Piperra' was founded in 1998 with the sole aim of publicising the 'Pimiento de Gernika' or 'Gernikako Piperra'. The group organises various promotional activities for 'Pimiento de Gernika' for people who enjoy this product on the traditional market in Gernika. The pepper takes its name from this town because it has traditionally been the area where it was most grown and the famous fruit and vegetable market where the pepper is one of the main attractions is held there every Monday.

The 'last Monday of Gernika' is the largest agricultural fair in the Basque Country with more than 100 000 visitors and is held on the last Monday of October. The founding map of the town of Gernika from 1366 contains references to this market.

The product's reputation also owes its fame to the study carried out by the market research company IKERFEL on products of recognised quality which was drawn up using a quantitative methodology based on 900 interviews that were held between 16 and 30 July 2009 with the people responsible for home shopping in the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country. According to this study, the name 'Pimiento de Gernika' or 'Gernikako Piperra' is recognised (spontaneous — suggested) by 83 % of the population of the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country.

As already mentioned, in addition to reputation and cultural practices, the climate in the limited geographic area is fundamental to the quality and particularity of this product.

The climate in the geographic area therefore combines the temperatures and humidity that this type of pepper needs for its vegetative and reproductive development.

When this pepper is grown in others areas in the south of Spain with a warmer climate and at times when temperatures are high and humidity is low, the marketable quality of the fruits is lessened because a higher proportion of the fruit is affected by the physiological problems described above of waterproof coating, apical-blossom end rot and/or spicy fruit.

It is a native variety that is grown in soil (both in the open air and in greenhouses) and has adapted perfectly to the under cover growing techniques farmers have been using since the 1970s. These systems for growing in greenhouses involve using cold tunnels without heating or lighting, or as so often with just support heating for the first growing phase. They aim to lengthen the growing cycle in order to increase production or to obtain better precocity and better market prices at the beginning of the season in comparison with the open air growing system which has a later production.

The local cultivar is the direct result of the observation skills and expertise of the farmers in the area. It reflects its relationship with the environment and is particularly well adapted to the climatic conditions in the area. Over a long period of time, man has been able to successfully maintain and grow the 'Pimiento de Gernika' variety and retain the particular commercial use which is made of it. This has made it possible to conserve the originality of this type of pepper. 'Pimiento de Gernika' owes its particularity to the fact that it is perfectly adapted to the production area.

Reference to publication of the specification:

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

The specifications were published in *Official Journal of the Basque Country* No 94 on 17 May 2007: http://www.euskadi.net/cgi-bin_k54/bopv_20?c&f=20070517&a=200702815
