

OTHER ACTS

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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 298/12)

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**'GRUYÈRE'****EC No: FR-PGI-0005-0612-25.06.2007****PGI (X) PDO ()****1. Name:**

'Gruyère'

2. Member State or third country:

France

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 (1) applies:

'Gruyère' is a cheese made from raw cow's milk. It comes in a flat, slightly bulging circular wheel shape with rounded sides. Its diameter ranges from 53 to 63 cm and its height from 13 to 16 cm.

It has a solid, grainy, rubbed rind, golden yellow to brown in colour. It is a hard cheese that has been cooked and pressed, is ivory to pale yellow in colour, must have holes ranging in size from that of a pea to a cherry and has characteristic aromas and flavours, resulting in particular from propionic fermentation.

The fat content of the cheese varies between 47 and 52 % after complete desiccation, with a dry matter content no less than 62 %.

The salt content is between 0,6 and 1,7 g of sodium chloride per 100 g of cheese.

Maturing lasts at least 120 days.

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 93, 31.3.2006, p. 12.

Prior to the cheese leaving the maturing cellar, a band must be affixed to the side of each wheel sold under the protected geographical indication 'Gruyère'.

'Gruyère' may also be presented in portions or in grated form.

Smears can be removed from packaged portions of at least 40 g on condition that these portions include a grainy part containing the rind, on which the impression of the cloth or mould is still visible.

3.3. *Raw materials (for processed products only):*

The milk used to produce the cheese comes exclusively from dairy herds composed of cows of traditional local breeds adapted to the soil: Abondance, Tarentaise, Montbéliarde, Vosgienne, Simmental française.

In order to preserve the quality of the milk, the duration of the collection from the first milk producer to the time when the milk is unloaded at the cheesemaker's may not exceed six hours.

The milk used to produce the cheese is fermented by adding one or more natural leavening(s) cultivated in whey and/or natural rennet from curd cheese. These cultivations produce at least thermophilic lactobacilli, which contribute to the acidification process.

3.4. *Feed (for products of animal origin only):*

In order to guarantee a close link between the soil and the product through specific feed from the geographical area, the basic feed of dairy cows consists of grass and hay, at least 70 % of the total ration for the dairy herd comprises feed produced on the holding, calculated as a percentage of dry matter, at least 80 % of the roughage consumed by the herd originates from the geographical area and each dairy cow receives not more than 1 800 kg of complementary feed a year.

Fermented fodder, whether silage products or other, are not to be used in the feed of the dairy herd at any time of the year owing to the technological risks related to these practices during the production and maturing of cheeses.

Only raw materials and complementary feed derived from non-transgenic products are authorised on the holding so as to preserve the traditional nature of the feed.

In order to maintain the traditional practice of grazing, farm production systems where all the feed is supplied in troughs are forbidden. A minimum annual period of 150 days of grazing is mandatory.

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

The milk is produced and the cheese manufactured and matured in the identified geographical area.

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

No simultaneous operations involving any product other than 'Gruyère' may take place on the cutting and packaging line.

It is prohibited to use additives or anti-caking agents when grating the cheese.

3.7. *Specific rules concerning labelling:*

All cheeses with the protected geographical indication 'Gruyère' must bear a label showing the PGI name in a font at least as large as the largest font shown on the label. No other qualifiers or other indications may be placed next to the protected geographical indication on the label, in the marketing material, on invoices or in commercial documents.

The Community logo 'PGI' must appear on the labelling.

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

The production of milk and the processing and maturation of cheese must be carried out in the geographical area covering the following municipalities:

in the department of Ain:

the cantons of Ambérieu-en-Bugey, Bellegarde-sur-Valserine, Belley, Brénod, Ceyzériat, Champagne-en-Valromey, Coligny, Collonges, Ferney-Voltaire, Gex, Hauteville-Lompnes, Izernore, Lagnieu, Lhuis, Nantua, Oyonnax-Nord, Poncin, Pont-d'Ain, Saint-Rambert-en-Bugey, Seyssel, Treffort-Cuisiat, Virieu-le-Grand, Péronnas, Oyonnax-Sud, Viriat, Oyonnax, Bourg-en-Bresse;

in the department of Côte-d'Or:

the cantons of Fontaine-Française, Saint-Jean-de-Losne, Seurre;

in the department of Doubs:

all municipalities;

in the department of Isère:

the cantons of Saint-Laurent-du-Pont and Touvet;

in the department of Jura:

all municipalities;

in the department of Haute-Marne:

the cantons of Bourbonne-les-Bains, Bourmont, Clefmont, Fayl-la-Forêt, Laferté-sur-Amance, Langres, Longeau-Percey, Val-de-Meuse, Neuilly-l'Évêque, Nogent, Prauthoy, Terre-Natale;

in the department of Haute-Saône:

all municipalities;

in the department of Saône-et-Loire:

the cantons of Beaurepaire-en-Bresse, Cuiseaux, Pierre-de-Bresse, Saint-Germain-du-Bois;

in the department of Savoie:

all municipalities;

in the department of Haute-Savoie:

all municipalities;

in the department of Vosges:

the cantons of Bains-les-Bains, Darney, Lamarche, Monthureux-sur-Saône, Plombières-les-Bains, Xertigny;

in the department of Territoire de Belfort:

the cantons of Delle, Fontaine, Giromagny, Rougemont-le-Château, Valdoie, Châtenois-les-Forges, Danjoutin, Beaucourt, Grandvillars, Offemont, Belfort.

Milk production and the processing of milk into pre-matured cheese can only be carried out in municipalities that have always done so using traditional methods and that meet the following criteria:

- a climate that tends towards continental with a large difference between winter and summer temperatures and, above all, high annual rainfall in excess of 900 mm (the rain falls evenly throughout the year, with heavy rain in the summer, which encourages the growth of grass).

— a substratum that is mostly calcareous or molassic and possibly covered with drift deposits; a substratum that allows for the development of a rich natural flora that is different from the flora found on recent alluvial deposits or crystalline formations.

5. **Link with geographical area:**

5.1. *Specificity of the geographical area:*

5.1.1. Natural factors

The geographical area covers upland areas and limestone plateaux that are difficult to cultivate and suited to the grassland grazing of dairy herds adapted to the harsh conditions of mountainous regions, with adjacent valleys where 'Gruyère' can be matured and distributed.

The geographical area is composed principally of calcareous sedimentary rock, where the soil is often rather thin.

Its climate tends, on the one hand, towards continental with a big difference between winter and summer temperatures and rainfall that, although it is even throughout the year, is heavy in the summer, and, on the other hand, towards northern with a low annual average temperature, despite summer heatwaves, and a large number of days of frost.

The climate is mountainous or sub-mountainous and very rainy, with annual rainfall in excess of 900 mm. This rainfall is heavy even at low altitudes and increases in the interior of the mountains, where coniferous trees such as spruce are predominant. Rainfall is distributed evenly throughout the year, and the lack of dry seasons promotes the growth of grass.

The cellars are still today often located in valleys or in plains, at important crossroads of communication. In the past, this made it easy to transport salt, part of which used to come from the Jura (e.g. the salt works of d'Arc-et-Senans, Salins les Bains, Poligny, Lons-le-Saunier, etc.), to the area. The delicate maturing process involves rubbing the cheeses with a combination of natural and local microflora, salt and water called a 'smear'. The microflora multiplies naturally in cellars where a favourable environment is created by a sufficient number of cheeses. This can be achieved by grouping together the cheeses that arrive from the cheese dairies. The smear constitutes a link between the natural microscopic environment and the specificity of the cheese.

5.1.2. Human factors: the system of cheese dairies

'Gruyère' has been produced for several centuries and is one of the oldest French cheeses. 'Gruyère' is mentioned in a very large number of historical documents from the entire eastern central region of France sharing a border with Switzerland. It is an international zone, part of which is in France, part in Switzerland. The borders of these two countries have changed over the centuries. The Kingdom of Savoie included part of modern-day France and part of modern-day Switzerland. The traditional name 'Gruyère' refers to the 'gruyers', tax collectors who exacted dues on the 'fruit' of the mountain: logging.

Since the end of the 19th century, the traditional production area for 'Gruyère' has corresponded to the area covered by the cheese dairies, namely a vast part of the central eastern regions of France including Franche-Comté, Savoie and Haute-Savoie as well as a few peripheral regions such as Bassigny (Haute-Marne), Bugey or Vercors.

The regional tradition of cheese-making is based on collective ways of sharing milk to produce large cheeses and thus profit throughout the year from the milk produced in the summer. The system is based on strong solidarity and common rules. The pooling of means enables each small milk-production unit to participate in the production of cheeses that can be eaten throughout the year. The milk producers in the cheese production cooperatives own the premises of the cheese dairy (called 'fruitière' in French) and are responsible for hiring the cheesemaker, who will increase the value of their milk production by making cheese.

Traditionally, milk production and cheese processing are located in a different place to that of the maturing premises. The characteristics of the environment described below contribute to the production of a type of milk used to make cheese. The milk is collected, delivered and processed daily. The first-stage processing of milk takes place near the grazing area. The complicated method of producing 'Gruyère' on these processing sites requires the special know-how of the cheesemaker, in particular concerning the use of various natural leavenings.

The pre-matured cheeses are transported to and grouped together in maturing cellars adapted to the maturation of 'Gruyère', where cheese maturers are in charge of the cheeses for several months. The maturation process calls for solid know-how of the different phases and an understanding of the parameters (kinetics, temperature, hygrometry, duration) enabling the development of propionic fermentation. Transporting pre-matured cheeses to sometimes distant maturation cellars is typical of the cheese-making tradition of the 'Gruyère' zone. It is part of the age-old specialisation of cheesemakers in the maturation process of this cheese, which results in a highly specialised know-how. Grouping the cheeses together in the same place promotes a specific kinetics of maturation, especially in warm cellars, and the development of a special microflora in the smear.

Besides, the strategic geographic location of the maturers facilitates the exportation of the matured cheeses to big consumption centres and also aids in marketing, with the maturers acting as promoters of 'Gruyère'.

5.2. *Specificity of the product:*

'Gruyère' is a hard-pressed, cooked cheese made of raw milk. It is large in size and matures slowly. It has a firm but elastic texture with holes: in fact, it is the only pressed and cooked cheese with a protected geographical indication that must have 'small holes'.

Part of the maturation, for which special know-how has developed, must take place partly in warm cellars so that cracks ranging in size from that of a pea to a cherry develop as a result of the fermentation process and so that the cheese acquires aromas and flavours characteristic of propionic fermentation.

'Gruyère' is the 'original' cheese behind a number of large cheeses produced in the eastern central region. They have developed into cheeses that usually have fewer holes owing to slight modifications of the processing and/or maturing techniques.

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):*

Natural factors and human know-how are combined to produce a specific type of cheese.

In the first stage, milk is produced in difficult mountain conditions from animals fed on grass and hay.

The physical conditions of the environment are favourable for milk production. The low-quality calcareous soils of the medium mountain area typical of a humid continental climate led to the development of cattle breeding that makes it possible to benefit from the area's grassland production. The natural plains, with their great floral wealth (broadleaf weeds, in particular), promote the development of aromatic compounds in this cheese. The greatest benefit is gained from local grass by using local dairy cow breeds and limiting the use of concentrates in the feed. By forbidding the use of fermented feed, it is possible to ensure the good outcome of the propionic fermentation at the origin of the holes and the characteristic aromas of the cheese during maturation. The aromatic richness of the natural prairie flora finds its way into the cheeses through the milk's own microflora. This is enhanced by the cheesemaker, who uses natural leavenings and traditional practices such as a fermenter made of copper and having a maximum useful capacity equivalent to the production of 14 wheels of cheese. The aromatic potential is not revealed until maturation, which is carried out in a specific way using natural local smears.

In the cheese-processing establishments, the cheesemaker's special know-how and the use of mostly indigenous leavenings and raw milk containing natural flora found in milk make it possible to preserve the aromatic potential and final quality of the cheeses. The joint collection of milk and the need to store the cheese for a long time (so that milk could be consumed in the form of cheese during the winter) are the reasons why this cheese has always come in large wheels.

Finally, the takeover of the product, its storage and its maturation by maturers who use natural smears and spruce (an abundant local resource) as a support and who master the special kinetics of maturation make it possible to reveal the organoleptic characteristics of 'Gruyère', in particular the holes and the aromas and flavours typical of propionic fermentation. The maturers of 'Gruyère' have ancestral know-how. However, it would not suffice without the know-how of the cattle breeders and cheesemakers. The three big players in the production of 'Gruyère' (milk producers, cheesemakers, maturers) are inseparable and work together to endow this special cheese with its specific qualities linked to its region of origin.

The maturer is located strategically along traffic routes. He or she is often settled on the outskirts of milk-production and cheese-processing areas, close to important crossroads that facilitate the export of the cheeses, made possible by their long storage life.

Reference to publication of the specification:

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

<https://www.inao.gouv.fr/fichier/CDCIGPGruyere.pdf>
