

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

(2011/C 189/15)

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

‘SEL DE GUÉRANDE/FLEUR DE SEL DE GUÉRANDE’

EC No: FR-PGI-0005-0861-22.02.2011

PGI (X) PDO ()

1. Name:

‘Sel de Guérande/Fleur de sel de Guérande’

2. Member State or third country:

France

3. Description of the agricultural product or foodstuff:

3.1. Type of product:

Class 1.8. Other products of Annex I to the Treaty (spices, etc.)

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

‘Sel de Guérande’ and ‘Fleur de sel de Guérande’ are hand-harvested sea salts originating exclusively from the salt marshes of the Guérande peninsula. They are unrefined, unwashed and additive-free sea salts. They mainly consist of sodium chloride crystals, but also naturally contain other mineral salts and trace elements.

The production of ‘Sel de Guérande’ and ‘Fleur de sel de Guérande’ is based on a natural process of concentration of salt in sea water, which circulates through a series of pools until it reaches the point of crystallisation in the final basin, the crystalliser or salt pan.

3.2.1. ‘Sel de Guérande’

‘Sel de Guérande’ is a grey sea salt consisting of salt crystals which form on the natural clay base of the salt pan. It is harvested by hand from the brine in the salt pan using a special tool. After storage and sorting, the ‘Sel de Guérande’ salt can be packaged either as it is, or after drying or grinding, in order to obtain salts of different granule sizes and moistness.

3.2.2. ‘Fleur de sel de Guérande’

‘Fleur de sel de Guérande’ is formed of light, fine, brittle crystals which, under favourable climatic conditions (wind and sun), form on the surface of the brine in the salt pans producing grey salt. The *fleur de sel* (salt blossom) is harvested by hand by skimming the surface of the salt pan using a special tool, before it can sink to the bottom of the pool, where it is no longer harvested as salt blossom.

The salt blossom differs from grey salt as it crystallises on the surface of the salt pans and is white in colour (it has no contact with the base of the salt pans). After storage and sorting, it is packaged either as it is, or after partial drying to improve its flow.

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 93, 31.3.2006, p. 12.

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

Not applicable.

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

Not applicable.

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

Processes which take place in the geographical area are:

- the harvesting of the 'Sel de Guérande' or the 'Fleur de sel de Guérande' salt,
- the bulk storage of the 'Sel de Guérande' or the 'Fleur de sel de Guérande' salt,
- the first packaging process which allows the products to be traced if they are re-packaged at a later date outside the geographical area.

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

Not applicable.

3.7. *Specific rules on labelling:*

'Sel de Guérande' and 'Fleur de sel de Guérande' salt must be kept in sealed packaging. The labelling must indicate:

- the name of the PGI: 'Sel de Guérande' for the grey salt and products formed by drying or grinding grey salt, and 'Fleur de sel de Guérande' for the salt-blossom salt,
- the PGI logo and/or indication of the 'Protected Geographical Indication',
- the name and address of the organisation responsible for the protection and management of the PGI.

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

The defined geographical area covers 39 communes of the Loire region (Loire-Atlantique) and 7 communes of Morbihan (Brittany).

Departments	Communes		
Loire-Atlantique (39 communes)	Asserac Batz-sur-Mer Baule-Escoublac (LA) Besne Bouée Campbon Chapelle-des-Marais (LA) Chapelle Launay (LA) Croisic (LE) Crossac Donges Drefféac Guenrouët	Guérande Herbignac Lavau-sur-Loire Malville Mesquer Missillac Montoir-de-Bretagne Piriac-sur-Mer Pont-Château Pornichet Pouliguen (LE) Prinquiau Quilly	Saint-André-des-Eaux Saint-Gildas-des-Bois Saint-Joachim Saint-Lyphard Saint-Malo-de-Guersac Saint-Molf Saint-Nazaire Sainte-Anne-sur-Brivet Sainte-Reine-de-Bretagne Savenay Sévérac Trignac Turballe (LA)
Morbihan (7 communes)	Camoël Férel Nivillac	Pénestin Roche-Bernard (LA) Saint-Dolay	Théhillac

5. **Link with geographical area:**

5.1. *Specificity of the geographical area:*

The specificity of the area is based on its climatic conditions: the presence of wind and sun, and an oceanic climate with mild winters and cool summers.

It is also based on soil type. The formation of coastal salt marshes requires large clay stretches situated at the limits of the highest tides and sheltered from the effects of the swell. The Guérande salt marshes are situated behind the sandbanks. The clay content of the soils (which makes them impermeable and malleable) has allowed the construction of man-made salt marshes.

The specificity of the area also comes from human factors and the way in which it is used. The first written records of salt marshes in the Guérande region date from 854 ('Cartulaire de Redon'). After a growth in the Guérande salt marshes between the 10th and 14th centuries, the number of salt pans increased considerably from the 16th century onwards, peaking in the 19th century. Between 1840 and 1960, there was a decline in the salt marshes. Since 1970, the production of salt in the Guérande basin has been rising once again. The salt marshes and the production techniques which are used are the same as in past centuries. The salt marshes are restored using traditional techniques. A centre for the vocational training of salt producers was created on the Guérande peninsula in 1979.

Because of the variability in production from year to year and for historic and economic reasons, producers and suppliers in the Guérande basin stockpile strategically. Salt storehouses were traditionally situated at the edge of the salt marshes. The geographical area covered by the PGI includes communes where, historically, storage facilities frequented by salt merchants were situated.

5.2. *Specificity of the product:*

Characteristic properties:

The harvesting method used in the Guérande peninsula salt marshes gives 'Sel de Guérande' salt and 'Fleur de sel de Guérande' salt their characteristic properties:

Physical properties: brittle texture, pale grey colour of the salt (harvested from a shallow layer of brine from the clay base of the salt pans). The 'Fleur de sel de Guérande' salt (which is 'gathered' from the surface of the salt pans before the harvesting of the salt) has a natural white colour.

Chemical properties: natural unwashed, unrefined and additive-free salts from the sea, which means they are richer in minerals (magnesium, calcium, potassium) and trace elements, and have a relatively high moisture content.

Organoleptic properties: not bitter or spicy.

The production method and the historic and current reputation of 'Sel de Guérande' salt and 'Fleur de sel de Guérande' salt contribute to the preservation of their particular characteristics.

Specific expertise:

The salt workers of the Guérande peninsula have perfected a production technique based on one of the oldest maritime agricultural systems of the whole of the French Atlantic coast. The structure of the salt marshes is specific to the Guérande basin. The salt worker simultaneously manages the level of the water and its circulation in the different pools to allow a progressive increase in the concentration of salt over several weeks (keeping a concentration in the salt marsh very close to the point of crystallisation), as well as the natural purification of the waters through decanting, and finally the harvest of the products.

The salt blossom is harvested by hand by skimming the surface of the salt pans using a special long-handled wooden rake (in a 'gathering' process) before the salt can sink to the bottom of the pan.

For 'Sel de Guérande' salt, the crystals are gathered together at the centre of the salt pans, brought towards a special platform at the edge of the salt pan and scraped onto it, using a tool called a 'las'. The use of the *las* allows the brine to be stirred and the crystals which have formed at the bottom of the salt pan to be removed, while leaving the clay particles behind.

The nature of the products and their characteristics (they require draining, do not flow easily, and have a rapid uptake of ambient moisture) mean that 'Sel de Guérande' salt and 'Fleur de sel de Guérande' salt are products which also require specific skills and knowledge for storage and packaging. In order to deliver the salt-blossom salt, which is drained and as clean as possible, to an operator or packager, producers carry out the initial storage (intermediate storage or pre-storage) and sorting of the product. This intermediate storage takes place on the premises of the producers, who do not necessarily live close to the salt marshes, given the pressure on land space. The boundaries of the PGI area take this into account.

Reputation:

The particular taste and nutritional qualities of 'Sel de Guérande' and 'Fleur de sel de Guérande' salt, renowned for centuries, make it the salt of gastronomes. Consumer interest in 'Sel de Guérande' and 'Fleur de sel de Guérande' salt is shown by studies and surveys undertaken by commercial marketing organisations and distributors, and many renowned restaurateurs and agri-food businesses have demonstrated their preference for this salt. Hundreds of articles refer to 'Sel de Guérande' and/or 'Fleur de sel de Guérande' salt.

The term 'Sel(s) de Guérande' has been used since at least 1698. 'Fleur de sel' features in publicity dating from the 1930s, but it is since the end of the 1970s that this name has become well known. The reputation of the terms 'Sel de Guérande' and 'Fleur de sel de Guérande' spread with the commercial development of these products at the end of the 1980s.

In a market for an extremely common product, 'Sel de Guérande' salt has been the pioneer in the salt market sector which today refers to 'locally produced salt'.

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 harvesting of 'Sel de Guérande' and 'Fleur de sel de Guérande' salt can only be carried out in salt marshes, which are clearly distinguished by their naturally-occurring clay and their location between the high and low points of spring tides. The complexity of the water network and the structure of the salt marshes form essential elements of the Guérande landscape and local knowledge.

The harvesting method used in the Guérande peninsula salt marshes is different from that used in other production areas on the Atlantic coast. This harvesting method is characterised by the use of the changes in tide, the use of three types of pool to encourage the concentration of salt, the frequency of the harvests, the harvesting of salt from the brine, and the non-mechanised harvesting process.

'Sel de Guérande' and 'Fleur de sel de Guérande' salt can only be stored in bulk in the PGI area, where producers and handlers in the sector have specific knowledge. Initial sealed and labelled packaging carried out in the PGI area before the product leaves it is also essential to guarantee the origin and traceability of the products.

Reference to the publication of the specification:

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

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