

OTHER ACTS

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Publication of an application pursuant to Article 50(2)(a) of Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council on quality schemes for agricultural products and foodstuffs

(2013/C 127/07)

This publication confers the right to object to the application pursuant to Article 51 of Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council ⁽¹⁾.

AMENDMENT APPLICATION

COUNCIL REGULATION (EC) No 510/2006**on the protection of geographical indications and designations of origin for agricultural products and foodstuffs ⁽²⁾****AMENDMENT APPLICATION ACCORDING TO ARTICLE 9****'RIZ DE CAMARGUE'****EC No: FR-PGI-0105-0073-25.10.2011****PGI (X) PDO ()****1. Heading in the specification affected by the amendment**

- Name of product
- Description of product
- Geographical area
- Proof of origin
- Method of production
- Link
- Labelling
- National requirements
- Other (formal amendments in order to comply with the defined plan and for ease of reading, and change of certifying body)

2. Type of amendment(s)

- Amendment to the Single Document or Summary Sheet

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 343, 14.12.2012, p. 1.

⁽²⁾ Replaced by Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012.

- Amendment to the specifications of the registered PDO or PGI for which neither the Single Document nor the Summary Sheet has been published
- Amendment to the specifications that does not involve any change to the published Single Document (Article 9(3) of Regulation (EC) No 510/2006)
- Temporary change in the specification resulting from the imposition of obligatory sanitary or phytosanitary measures by the public authorities (Article 9(4) of Regulation (EC) No 510/2006)

3. Amendment(s)

3.1. Description of product

The amendments to the specifications are as follows:

- ‘Pre-cooked’ rice has been removed from the range of rice using the PGI. The pre-cooking procedure is no longer used in the Camargue: ‘fast cooking’ rice are manufactured, without heat treatment, by cutting the pericarp. Therefore, the criteria for ‘wholegrain or brown Camargue rice’ are used to characterise these grains.

This amendment also affects the Summary Sheet which specified pre-cooked rice in part 4.2 (Description).

- The moisture content of ‘white rice’ and ‘parboiled rice’ has been raised in line with the accepted value for ‘wholegrain rice’ and ‘brown rice’, that is equal to or lower than 15 %. The drying process makes grains processed more fragile, entailing higher sorting costs (re-sorting) and risks lowering quality levels for the consumer (broken grains can appear after packaging). This amendment therefore aims to limit the risk of breakages and also contributes to ensuring the consistency of the product. This amendment also affects the Summary Sheet in part 4.2 (Description).
- Level of inert matter: the overall level of impurities was removed, whereas two of its components were maintained: level of inorganic impurities and level of organic matter with other grains. The threshold level for organic matter, which was set at ‘trace’ level, has been readjusted to the accepted level for high-grade rice, that is equal to or lower than 0,05 %. These amendments do not affect the Summary Sheet.
- Quality of the preparation: the level of paddy rice in white rice and parboiled rice, which was set at ‘trace’ level, has been readjusted to a level which is equal to or lower than 0,06 % for wholegrain and brown rice, white and parboiled rice. The same amendment has been made for the level of husked rice in white and parboiled rice: ‘trace’ level, which was recorded as 0,06 %. Criteria for rice striated with red and self-propagating red rice have also been merged for the authorised levels (the levels of self-propagating red rice in white and parboiled rice were set at ‘trace’ level in the registered PGI). The criteria were merged because they are very similar and difficult to distinguish during controls. The merger will thus simplify these controls. The levels of rice striated with red and self-propagating red rice are equal to or lower than 2 % respectively in wholegrain and brown rice, and equal to or lower than 1 % in white and parboiled rice. These amendments affect the Summary Sheet in part 4.2 (Description).
- Ripening: the level of unripe grains, which was set at ‘trace’ in white and parboiled rice, has been readjusted to a level which is equal to or lower than 0,5 %. The level of unripe grains has also been amended for white and parboiled rice and is from now on lower than 3 %. These amendments affect the Summary Sheet in part 4.2 (Description).

- Damaged and shrivelled grains: on one hand, the overall 'damaged and shrivelled grains' criterion has been removed and replaced by its components, with a merger of the 'stained grains' and 'spotted grains' parameters; on the other hand, the criterion 'yellow grains', which had been set at 'trace' level, is merged with the 'amber grains' criterion. The aim of these mergers is to group together any defects with the same origin (illnesses and scalding), which are sometimes difficult to distinguish during controls. The merger will thus simplify these controls. The level of damaged grains (stained and spotted) are respectively lower than 0,5 % in wholegrain and brown rice, and lower than 0,3 % in white and parboiled rice. The level of scalded rice (yellow and amber) is lower than 0,1 % for wholegrain and brown rice, white and parboiled rice. These amendments affect the Summary Sheet in part 4.2 (Description).

These amendments (level of inert matter, quality of preparation, ripening, damaged and scalded grains) were mainly made in order to simply control analyses, even if they do not necessary improve quality. Another aim of these amendments was to define a quantified threshold for levels previously set as 'trace' so as to have a measurable minimum threshold for a given sample. Levels set at 'trace' were defined but within reasonable limits (never higher, for instance, than what is tolerated for high-grade rice) so as not to compromise the consistency of the product.

- It was stated in the specifications and in the single document that the same type of grain is used in both the pure product and in the mixture.

3.2. *Geographical area*

The addition of the municipality of Fontvieille is purely formal since the boundaries of the geographical area remain unchanged and since that municipality was included in the geographical area of the registered PGI. This addition does not affect the Summary Sheet since the municipalities were not listed there.

3.3. *Proof of origin*

Traceability requirements are defined according to the preparation phase, under the plan stipulated in Regulation (EC) No 510/2006. Most of the elements are extracted from the traceability table set out in the specifications of the Product Conformity Certification which was previously associated with the PGI, and which the production of Riz de Camargue complied with.

Names of varieties have now been added, in the botanical meaning of the term during the sowing, reaping and storage phases.

3.4. *Method of production*

1. The amendments to the specifications are as follows:

- Procedure for selecting varieties:

The list of varieties which can be used for Riz de Camargue is established according to a procedure which ensures that all of the operators of the PGI are consulted. The selection criteria are twofold. On one hand, they ensure that the variety is adapted to the agro-climatic context of the Camargue (the criteria used are: robustness when harvested, earliness, the height of the plants, resistance to heavy rain, reaction to disease). On the other hand, they ensure that all of the varieties sown correspond to the same type and produce grains with similar features, thus resulting in a product with a high degree of physical uniformity after preparation (type of grain, degree of processing, absence of defects) and very similar reactions when cooked (cooking time and stickiness). Authorised rice varieties still belong to the Japonica and Indica varieties. The choice of authorised varieties is based on experiments carried out by the Centre Français du Riz de Camargue (French Centre for Camargue Rice). These amendments do not affect the Summary Sheet.

The advantage of this additional constraint, which was agreed upon following a meeting between industry operators, is to provide an additional means of improving quality and to strengthen the link with the geographical area.

The uniformity of the product, which is a feature of Riz de Camargue, is therefore a result of all the operations involved during its preparation, which include: cultivation in conditions which are purified by the climate and perfected by water management, together with the choice of varieties, which is a way to further reduce pressure from disease (selection of tolerant varieties) and to reduce the variability of grain types within the same family.

In addition, this provision reinforces production lifespan and possibilities for supervised control by limiting the use of unsuitable and/or over-sensitive varieties.

- During the 'sowing' phase there is a new traceability constraint for the variety, including in cases of 're-sowing':

Only those varieties listed by the industry committee can be used.

When re-sowing, the farmer must use the same variety or a variety of the same type.

Information on the varieties are traced.

The aim here is consistency with what is described under stage 1 (choice of varieties which can be used) of the specifications, so that upstream use of this additional tool translates into improved quality throughout the industry: at the cultivation stage, then during harvesting management and the stocking of paddy rice, whilst avoiding inadequate mixtures.

- Harvesting management: the moisture content and the level of inert matter in rice entering containers at the storage body were specified: moisture content less than 25 % and level of inert matter (organic and inorganic) less than 10 %.

They were also specified for paddy rice, once cleaned and dried, at the start of the preparation process: moisture content less than 15 % and level of inert matter (organic and inorganic) less than 4 %. These amendments do not affect the Summary Sheet.

This characterisation of paddy rice, which helps to prepare Riz de Camargue, includes information on the specified levels of moisture and impurities.

The advantage of this description is visible in the current agro-industrial context of the Camargue, in which Camargue paddy rice is traded, where the trades of harvester-stocker and rice-grower can be carried out by different companies. This description is therefore useful.

2. The amendments to the specifications are as follows:

Addition of a new phase, 'Selecting plots':

The requirement for Camargue rice plots to each have independent entry and exit circuits for water, thus avoiding overspill between plots, is not new, but it is highlighted as an original characteristic of the Riz de Camargue production process. This constraint appeared previously in the specifications of the Product Conformity Certification annexed to the PGI registration request lodged in 1998, but it was not very visible in the PGI Specifications.

The advantage of making it visible is to better inform the consumer.

3.5. Link

The link to the geographical area of origin was redesigned and is split into three parts: specificity of the area where Riz de Camargue is prepared, specificity of Riz de Camargue, causal link between the geographical area and the specificity of Riz de Camargue.

- Specificity of the area where Riz de Camargue is prepared

Addition of this paragraph which did not appear in the registered PGI specifications.

- Specificity of Riz de Camargue

Addition of this chapter which did not appear as such in the registered PGI specifications, but which reuses certain elements established previously.

- A distinctive quality

Elements initially defined in Chapter 6.3 (Qualities and Characteristics linked to the Origin) have been reused, but have been completed and reorganised into a coherent whole, visible for the consumer: consistency of the rice — the Camargue quality table is an operational rendering for operators and for control purposes.

The elements from the previous Specifications which are reused in this summary of characteristics are:

1. 'Almost no cryptogramic pressure', whereby the visible result for the consumer is the low percentage of stained grains;
2. 'Excellent grain preservation', which did not refer to the preservation of ready-to-eat Riz de Camargue, but to the preservation of paddy rice and to the low proportion of yellow or amber grains in packaged Riz de Camargue.

- Specific know-how

Elements present in the registered PGI Specifications (Chapter 6.3: Qualities and Characteristics linked to the Origin) and in the Annex of technical recommendations have been reused and added to.

- History and long-standing reputation

This is a summary of elements previously established, without amendments.

- Current reputation

Reused information with an update of the characterisation of the industry.

- Causal link between the geographical area and the specificity of Riz de Camargue

The article has been rewritten using elements presented in Articles 8.1 and 8.2

3.6. Labelling

Removal of the special characteristics linked to the Product Conformity Certification and addition of the EU logo.

The advantage of including the EU logo is to allow the product, which can be marketed in packaging of various brands, shapes and colours, to be more easily identified.

3.7. National requirements

Entirely new section, which includes the main elements to be controlled.

Removal of the reference to Law No 94-2 of 3 January 1994 on quality recognition of agricultural and food products.

3.8. Other

Formal amendments were made to the specifications, notably to comply with the standard plan in force.

The name and contact details of the control structure have been amended. It is now run by Certipaq.

SINGLE DOCUMENT

COUNCIL REGULATION (EC) No 510/2006

on the protection of geographical indications and designations of origin for agricultural products and foodstuffs⁽³⁾

‘RIZ DE CAMARGUE’

EC No: FR-PGI-0105-0073-25.10.2011

PGI (X) PDO ()

1. Name

‘Riz de Camargue’

2. Member State or Third Country

France

3. Description of the agricultural product or foodstuff

3.1. Type of product

Class 1.6. Fruit, vegetables, cereals, fresh or processed

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

‘Riz de Camargue’ corresponds to different grain types: round grains, medium grains, A-type long grains, B-type long grains.

Authorised rice varieties belong to the Japonica and Indica varieties.

The list of authorised varieties is established by the organisation which updates it yearly. This list is established on the basis of agronomic criteria (robustness when harvested, earliness, height of the plants, resistance to heavy rain and reaction to disease), which aim to ensure that the variety is adapted to the agro-climatic context of Camargue and to ensure that all of the varieties sown correspond to the same type and produce grains with similar features.

‘Riz de Camargue’ is rice to be consumed and is available in different states of preparation: wholegrain or brown rice (brown or coloured), white rice (natural or naturally perfumed) and parboiled rice. It can be marketed as a pure product (same grain type and same preparation state) or as a mixture of rice in different states of preparation, each corresponding to a grain type.

⁽³⁾ See footnote 2.

'Riz de Camargue' is a high-grade rice, characterised by a high degree of consistency: it is not subject to any sanitary issue/deterioration (deterioration, smell, taste), the level of breakages is only 5 % and the percentage of grains with the same type is equal to or higher than 97 %.

Moreover, 'Riz de Camargue' is a rice which is:

- particularly clean: the levels of inorganic and organic impurities are equal to or less than 0,01 % and 0,05 % respectively,
- very high quality preparation: the percentages of 'foreign' rice are very low: level of paddy rice equal to or lower than 0,06 %; level of red and rice striated with red equal to or lower than 1 % in white and parboiled rice and equal to or lower than 2 % in wholegrain and brown rice; level of 'cargo' (or husked) rice equal to or lower than 0,06 % in white or parboiled rice; damaged grains account for less than 0,5 % in wholegrain and brown rice, and lower than 0,3 % in white and parboiled rice; the level of shrivelled grains is lower than 0,1 %,
- the grains are very regular in maturity and format: the level of unripe grains is equal to or lower than 5 % in wholegrain and brown rice and less than 3 % in white and parboiled rice; the consistency of formats is ensured by the selection of varieties which can be cultivated for preparing 'Riz de Camargue'; this selection is carried out every year by the PGI Defence and Management Body.

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

All operations, that is the cultivation, harvesting, drying and stocking of paddy rice, are carried out in the geographical area. The fact that the various preparation phases of the rice are close together ensure that, in terms of the quality of the finished product, the rice is very consistent; the corresponding reduction in transportation limits the risk of the grains being damaged before drying completely.

3.6. Specific rules on slicing, grating, packaging, etc.

Not applicable.

3.7. Specific rules concerning labelling

The name 'Riz de Camargue' must appear on all rice which is marketed, regardless of the packaging.

On top of the required legal information, the European logo must appear on all 'Riz de Camargue' labels, near to the protected geographic indication.

4. Concise definition of the geographical area

The geographical area of the PGI 'Riz de Camargue' covers the territory of the following municipalities:

- in the Bouches-du-Rhône department: Arles, Les Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer, Port-Saint-Louis-du-Rhône, Tarascon, Fontvieille,
- in the department of Gard: Saint-Gilles, Vauvert, Aigues-Mortes, Beaucaire, Fourques, Saint-Laurent d'Aigouze, Le Cailar, Le Grau-du-Roi, Aimargues, Bellegarde.

5. Link with the geographical area

5.1. Specificity of the geographical area

The Camargue features a whole series of natural and human factors, which are very much inter-dependent, making it a unique and identifiable rice production area.

(a) The physical surroundings (natural environment)

The territory features:

- the absence of hills or mountains and very low altitude, always lower than 5 metres, which allows flat surfaces, suitable for flooded cultivation and for mastering water levels, to be identified,
- the presence beneath the soil of salted groundwater which in places has higher concentrations of salt than seawater;
- a Mediterranean-style climate whose most salient features are as follows:
 - low rainfall and plenty of sunshine,
 - violent winds, which blow for most of the year (more than 200 days per year on average), including the 'Mistral', a cold a very dry wind which significantly increases evaporation (900 mm on average in the area and up to 1 300 mm on average per year),
 - a very high water shortage, which induces salted groundwater to rise up by capillary action,
 - average seasonal temperatures which are almost always positive, with very marked temperature ranges from day to day and from year to year, which is a constraint for cultivation and which can have an impact on the length of the growing season.

(b) A specific hydraulic system

The Rhône river, which forms the delta, is an 'inexhaustible' source of fresh water, thus providing the Camargue with all of its water needs. The fresh water spreads through and covers almost all of the Camargue territory thanks to an impressive network of irrigation and drainage channels, which are maintained by rice farmers. These channels are divided into two hydrographical networks, separated by rice fields: one flooding the rice fields upstream, the other emptying and draining water downstream.

(c) Human and organisational factors

The 'Riz de Camargue' production area is a territory where the rice farming specialisation is necessary in order to combat the sterilisation of the land by the rise of salt. By cleaning the salt and helping to improve the hydraulic network, rice growing is decisive for improving agricultural and for socio-economic development in Camargue.

As such, the various operators involved in rice production and processing have been organised for a long time in a structured industry, located mainly on the territory of the Rhône delta. In particular, this industry has a technical institute, the French Rice Centre (Centre Français du Riz), dedicated to rice growing in the production zone.

The structured nature of this industry is also demonstrated by the fact that all of the harvesting bodies of 'Riz de Camargue' are located in the production area, immediately next to the growing plots.

5.2. Specificity of the product

(a) A distinctive quality

One of the features of the finished product 'Riz de Camargue' is its very high degree of consistency and the small number of defective grains: particularly in terms of stained, amber and green grains.

'Riz de Camargue' is rice to be consumed and is available in different states of preparation: wholegrain or brown rice (brown or coloured), white rice (natural or naturally perfumed) and parboiled rice. It can be marketed as a pure product or as a mixture of rice.

'Riz de Camargue' has a very high quality of preparation: the grains are very regular in terms of format, the level of breakages is only 5 % and the percentage of grains with the same format is equal to or higher than 97 %.

(b) *Specific know-how*

'Riz de Camargue' cultivation has several distinctive features which are mainly due to the natural environment and to its location in the delta.

The production technique, using small plots which each have an entry and exit for water, located within a complex system of irrigation and drainage channels, requires specific know-how from producers.

Correct management of water levels in each plot is essential.

- When the rice fields are being prepared for cultivation, they are drained so as to limit the presence of pathogenic mushrooms.
- During cultivation, water management optimises the both the growth of the plants and any weedkillers used.
- At the end of the growing cycle, the rice field is dried to limit contact between the grains and water in case of a downpour due to the climatic conditions, which would damage the quality of the crop, as well the level of inert matter found therein.

(c) *A long-standing and enduring reputation*

The history of Camargue rice can be traced back to the 13th century. In his Decree of 23 August 1593 for instance, Henri IV ordered sugarcane, madder and rice to be grown in Camargue.

Cultivation started on a larger scale during the 14th century, after the Rhône was dammed up in 1855, and mainly developed after 1945 following the blockade of the coasts and food shortages. The cultivation occupied up to 35 000 ha in Camargue and on the Mediterranean fringe of Port-Saint-Louise-du-Rhône in Perpignan, and satisfies all internal needs.

In 1965, cultivation started to decline but it remained in Camargue, covering several thousand hectares, concentrated on the lowest lands where nothing else can be grown. Rice farming developed again after 1981, when a recovery plan was implemented.

This long-standing and enduring cultivation of rice on the territory has contributed to the reputation of 'Riz de Camargue', which no longer needs to be proved since it received an honorary medal at the World Fair of 1856 and the PGI 'Riz de Camargue' in 2000. Today, its reputation is maintained by various popular cultural events such as the celebration of 'New Rice' (Prémices du Riz) or the rice festival (Feria).

In 2012, Camargue produced 100 000 tons of paddy rice from around 20 000 ha of crops, that is to say a third of rice consumed by the French. The industry had more than 200 operators in 2012.

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 uniqueness of the Camargue ecosystem contributes greatly to the quality of 'Riz de Camargue':

- Good exposure to sunlight, which guarantees every year the 1 750 hours of exposure which the rice needs, helps the crops to grow and ensures regular yields.

- The closed nature of Camargue, associated with a high degree of evaporation, entails the artificial introduction of fresh water to compensate the natural water shortage and to control water levels in the rice fields. This management of water levels is ensured by the hydraulic infrastructure, made up of pumping stations which function correctly and which cover around 80 % of the agricultural areas, allowing for integrated production. This is an additional means of bringing diseases under control. The harvested rice thus has a naturally low percentage of stained grains.
- The strength and frequency of the Mistral, the dominant wind covering the entire area, purify cultivation conditions, considerably reduce attacks from mushrooms and in particular prevent the development of toxins (mycotoxin, aflatoxin).

Moreover, the proximity of the harvesting sites, where the grains are taken to be dried as soon as they are harvested, preserves the quality of the grains. During the drying phase, a large number of the risks linked to the deterioration of the grains' appearance disappear. As such, the very short circuit between the production fields and the drying units reduces risks linked to the shrivelling of grains, and therefore the proportion of yellow or amber grains.

The specificity of 'Riz de Camargue' is its high degree of consistency, which results both from the coordinated organisation of the production industry, from practices and varieties which are adapted to the agro-climatic characteristics of the area, and from the fact that conditions are identical throughout the production zone.

'Riz de Camargue' also has a strong reputation linked to its long-standing cultivation on this territory: it is one of the very few crops which exploit the territory and which preserves it by limiting rises of salt.

Local know-how, which was built up in response to the particular cultivation conditions and using available production factors, has now been consolidated by the presence of specialised technicians and a technical institute, le French Rice Centre (Centre Français du Riz), which is dedicated to rice farming and which issues recommendations to rice farmers on the cultivation cycle.

Reference to publication of the specification

(Article 5(7) of Regulation (EC) No 510/2006 ⁽⁴⁾)

<https://www.inao.gouv.fr/fichier/CDCIGPRizDeCamargueV1.pdf>

⁽⁴⁾ See footnote 2.