



C/2024/2260

20.3.2024

Publication of an application for registration of a name 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

(C/2024/2260)

This publication confers the right to oppose the application pursuant to Article 51 of Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council ⁽¹⁾ within three months from the date of this publication.

SINGLE DOCUMENT

‘Hjälmargös’

EU No: PDO-SE-02888

Submitted on 9 January 2023

1. Name(s) of PDO

‘Hjälmargös’

2. Member State or Third Country

Sweden

3. Description of the agricultural product or foodstuff

3.1. Type of product

Class 1.7. Fresh fish, molluscs, and crustaceans and products derived therefrom

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

‘Hjälmargös’ is a wild-caught fresh pike-perch (*Sander lucioperca*) from Lake Hjälmaren. The fish must be at least 45 cm long when caught and is sold either fresh or frozen, whole or as fillets.

The taste of ‘Hjälmargös’ is influenced by several factors relating to its habitat. Lake Hjälmaren is a nutrient-rich body of water, which provides the fish with a good supply of its primary food source, smelt (*Osmerus eperlanus*). Studies of smelt from various waters show that smelt from Lake Hjälmaren have a quite unique fatty acid composition, which also affects the fatty acid content of the pike-perch. Studies have shown that the nutrient-rich environment also makes ‘Hjälmargös’ grow extremely quickly and evenly. This produces a plumper fish which, when cooked, has a soft, tender texture.

Size

≥ 45 cm long

≥ 0,8 kg

Taste

People with sensory training often describe the taste of ‘Hjälmargös’ as delicately fishy and clean. When raw, ‘Hjälmargös’ has a tender flavour. A mild nutty and cantarel taste can be distinguished. The aftertaste is metallic.

Cooking ‘Hjälmargös’ brings out the fat in the fish and reveals a palette of flavours. This includes a hint of sweetness and a certain saltiness. A faint nutty taste is still detectable, as well as notes of shellfish.

Texture

‘Hjälmargös’ has a melt-in-the-mouth texture without a fatty sensation. The taste of ‘Hjälmargös’ is so mild that in thin slices it is the texture, with distinct and firm laminae, that is the most prominent characteristic of the tasting experience.

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 343, 14.12.2012, p. 1, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2012/1151/oj>.

Colour

The meat of 'Hjälmargin' has a pearlescent shimmer.

Nutritional content (per 100 g of fish meat)

Energy (kcal)	80 - 90
Fat (g)	0,2 - 0,3
Protein (g)	20 - 26

These are not control points but rather an overview of the ranges of nutritional values normally found in wild-caught pike-perch.

3.3. *Feed (for products of animal origin only) and raw materials (for processed products only)*

The pike-perch is a predatory fish and feeds on other wild fish living in the same waters. In Lake Hjälmargin the smelt (*Osmerus eperlanus*) is the primary food, averaged across the year. Depending on the availability of smelt and the season, perch (*Perca fluviatilis*), roach (*Rutilus rutilus*) and bleak (*Alburnus alburnus*) also form part of the diet.

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

'Hjälmargin' is caught and landed on Lake Hjälmargin. The fish is removed and is then either chilled or frozen whole or cut into fillets and then chilled. Fillets may also be frozen. All operations must take place in the geographical area.

Whole 'Hjälmargin' may not be frozen outside the geographical area and sold under the name 'Hjälmargin'.

3.5. *Specific rules concerning slicing, grating, packaging, etc. of the product the registered name refers to*

—

3.6. *Specific rules concerning labelling of the product the registered name refers to*

Every delivery of 'Hjälmargin' is labelled with the following (in addition to information required by law):

- date of catch
- fisherman (ID number)
- protected designation (PDO)

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

The geographical area is made up of Lake Hjälmargin. The boundary of the lake is delineated by the shoreline and straight lines between the two outermost points of the mouth of each tributary and outlet of the lake.

The land area around the lake up to 1 km from the demarcation lines of the lake is also included in the geographical area for activities in the production chain comprising storage, processing and preparation of 'Hjälmargin'.

Lake Hjälmargin is Sweden's fourth largest lake by surface area (484 km²) and is located in Mälardalen in central Sweden. The origin of the name is the Old Swedish word *iælmbær, meaning roughly 'the stormy lake'. The lake is divided between three regions, Södermanland, Närke and Västmanland. Lake Hjälmargin can be divided into five more or less delineated basins: Hemfjärden, Mellanfjärden, Stor-Hjälmargin, Södra Hjälmargin and Östra Hjälmargin.

Commercial fishing takes place mainly in Stor-Hjälmargin and Östra Hjälmargin, as well as in the easternmost part of Mellanfjärden. Western Mellanfjärden and to a certain extent Hemfjärden are very shallow spawning and nursery areas for the pike-perch (less than 2 m deep).

5. Link with the geographical area

The link between the geographical area and the organoleptic characteristics of 'Hjälmargös' is due both to the natural conditions of the area and to human factors.

Natural conditions

- shallow water
- high average temperature
- high nutrient levels
- low water transparency
- 'Hjälmargös' and the primary prey fish both genetically adapted

The lake is characterised by shallow water, high temperatures and high nutrient levels. In all three respects, Lake Hjälmaren can be regarded as extreme for a large northern European lake. The average depth is only 6,1 m. The lake has always been shallow, but was lowered by more than one metre during extensive lake lowering operations in 1878-1887 to release farming land around the lake. The shallow water contributes to the high temperature. The entire mass of water is churned up when it is windy on the lake, which means that in summer there is no water below the thermocline. The nutrient status is very high with average phosphorus levels of around 50 µg/l in Stor-Hjälmaren. This contributes to low water transparency in the lake, which is an advantage for predators hunting prey fish. All of these factors are beneficial for 'Hjälmargös'.

The lake's high temperatures and nutrient levels provide the fish with an adequate supply of its primary food source, smelt (*Osmerus eperlanus*). Studies of smelt from various waters show that smelt from Lake Hjälmaren have a quite unique fatty acid composition, which also affects the fatty acid content of the pike-perch. Studies have shown that the nutrient-rich environment makes 'Hjälmargös' grow extremely quickly and evenly. This produces a plumper fish which, when cooked, has a soft, tender texture.

Genetic studies also show that the pike-perch population in Lake Hjälmaren has adapted to its specific conditions. In-depth analysis of pike-perch from the Baltic Sea and lakes in central Sweden shows that the pike-perch in Lake Hjälmaren is unique and is genetically different from all other pike-perch, including those in nearby water bodies. Pike-perch from Lake Hjälmaren are used to populate other fishing grounds, but in those cases there has been no measurable genetic change in the population. The genetically distinct population of 'Hjälmargös' is found only in Lake Hjälmaren. There is also no transfer of pike-perch from other water bodies to Lake Hjälmaren.

Human factors

The taste of 'Hjälmargös' is influenced by other factors in addition to those relating to its unique habitat and genetics:

- focus on quality and sustainable management of the pike-perch stock
- large number of commercial fishermen – short time from catch to delivery
- knowledge of the biotope

Fishing for 'Hjälmargös' is carried out in accordance with strict rules, which are drawn up in close collaboration between fishermen and the authorities. Fishing may only be carried out using gear with a mesh size no less than 60 mm. The fish may not be smaller than 45 cm at the time of catch. In order not to jeopardise the availability of food, restraint is exercised when fishing for the pike-perch's prey fish. There is no trawling in the lake. The choice of fishing gear and location varies over the year and is based on many years of experience. The fishing methods mean that each fish is handled and assessed individually by the fisherman. The restriction on fishing put in place by the commercial fisheries is one reason for the quality of 'Hjälmargös'. The fish's size, rapid growth (high water temperature and nutrient content and good prey availability) and freshness are three important factors for the flavour of 'Hjälmargös', which can be linked to the way in which commercial fishing is carried out on Lake Hjälmaren.

The sustainability of 'Hjälmargös' is confirmed by the fish's Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certification. However, MSC certification is not a requirement for a protected designation. 'Hjälmargös' is considered to be a quality fish.

Fishing for pike-perch in the lake builds on a more than 500-year fishing tradition. Today, pike-perch fishing in Lake Hjälmaren is carried out by 35 commercial fishermen with home ports around the lake, which is an unusually high number for a lake of this size. Small-scale fishing means that fishermen are never far from their home port and it often takes no more than 2 hours from catch to unloading on the quayside. In heavy weather it can take up to 5 hours at most. At the warmest time of year, the fish is put on ice on the boat. The clean and 'fishy' taste that characterises 'Hjälmargös' is linked to the low-impact fishing. Short time between catch and handling on land. The quality may be referred to as freshness, which is also a quality preserved through rapid freezing shortly after landing.

Lake Hjälmaren is a special fishing ground that requires extensive know-how in order to master the special characteristics of the lake and to fish in the right place at the right time for the best quality.

Reference to publication of the product specification

<https://www.livsmedelsverket.se/globalassets/foretag-regler-kontroll/livsmedelsinformation-markning-halsopastaenden/skyddade-beteckningar/produktspecifikation-hjalmargos-20240109.pdf>