



C/2025/2296

15.4.2025

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

(C/2025/2296)

Following this publication, the authorities of a Member State or of a third country, or a natural or legal person having a legitimate interest and established or resident in a third country, may lodge, in accordance with Article 17 of Regulation (EU) 2024/1143 of the European Parliament and of the Council ⁽¹⁾ an opposition with the Commission within 3 months from the date of this publication.

SINGLE DOCUMENT

' Κρήτη / Kriti '

EU No: PGI-GR-02793 – 28.7.2021

PDO () PGI (X)

1. **Name(s)**

' Κρήτη / Kriti '

2. **Member State or Third Country**

Greece

3. **Description of the agricultural product or foodstuff**

3.1. *Type of product*

Class 1.5. Oils and fats (butter, margarine, oil, etc.)

Combined nomenclature code

— 15 – ANIMAL, VEGETABLE OR MICROBIAL FATS AND OILS AND THEIR CLEAVAGE PRODUCTS; PREPARED EDIBLE FATS; ANIMAL OR VEGETABLE WAXES

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

'Κρήτη / Kriti' extra virgin olive oil is produced from olives grown in the Region of Crete at least 90 % of which are of the Koroneiki or Tsounati varieties, or a combination of the two, while a maximum of 10 % may comprise other varieties, the main one being the Throumba variety.

Chemical characteristics:

- Acidity (% by weight of oleic acid): $\leq 0,6$
- Extinction coefficient K270: $\leq 0,15$
- Extinction coefficient K232: $\leq 2,00$
- Extinction coefficient variation Delta-K: ≤ 0
- Peroxide value (meq active oxygen/Kg): ≤ 15

(¹) Regulation (EU) 2024/1143 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 April 2024 on geographical indications for wine, spirit drinks and agricultural products, as well as traditional specialities guaranteed and optional quality terms for agricultural products, amending Regulations (EU) No 1308/2013, (EU) 2019/787 and (EU) 2019/1753 and repealing Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012 (OJ L, 2024/1143, 23.4.2024, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1143/oj>).

Organoleptic characteristics (median properties):

- Fruitiness: $\geq 2,5$
- Bitterness: $\geq 1,0$
- Pungency: $\geq 1,0$
- Defects: 0,0

The physical and chemical characteristics (low acidity, low extinction coefficients, low peroxide value, rich fruity aroma and taste and clear, bright green colour) of 'Κρήτη / Kriti' extra virgin olive oil constitute the product's specifications and apply at the time of bottling.

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

'Κρήτη / Kriti' extra virgin olive oil is produced from olives at least 90 % of which are of the Koroneiki or Tsounati varieties, or a combination of the two, while a maximum of 10 % may comprise other varieties, the main one being the Throumba variety.

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

The olives intended for the production of 'Κρήτη / Kriti' extra virgin olive oil must be grown and pressed within the defined geographical area.

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

'Κρήτη / Kriti' extra virgin olive oil will be bulk-stored in tanks at the standardisation stage before packaging, and packaged, exclusively within the defined area in order to preserve the characteristics to which the product owes its reputation, which could be impaired by light, oxygen and high temperatures. The effect of such factors could cause the olive oil to oxidise. Decanting and transport procedures increase the chances of the olive oil being exposed to oxygen, while at the same time creating the risk that, through the use of pumps, air could make its way into the oil. It is also possible that the oil could deteriorate in quality during decanting, by absorbing odours from the surrounding environment. The fact that Crete is an island and products are transported by sea increases the transport time and, consequently, the likelihood of the quality of the olive oil being impaired. Further deterioration may occur due to the effect of high temperatures during transport.

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

—

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

The proposed product will be produced exclusively in the Region of Crete, which comprises the regional units of Chania, Rethymnon, Heraklion and Lasithi and all their municipalities and local communities.

5. **Link with the geographical area**

The application for registration of the name 'Κρήτη / Kriti' is founded on the quality characteristics of the product, which are linked to the geographical environment, the human factor and the product's reputation.

The organoleptic and chemical characteristics of 'Κρήτη / Kriti' extra virgin olive oil are its low acidity, low extinction coefficients, low peroxide value, rich fruity aroma and taste and clear, bright green colour.

The link between 'Κρήτη / Kriti' and the environment is based on the geography, soil and climate conditions and socio-historical factors present in the defined area, which affect the physico-chemical and organoleptic characteristics of 'Κρήτη / Kriti' olive oil.

Crete's geographical position, its climate and the type and quality of the soil are the main factors that have led to the development of olive growing on the island. The soils are rich in calcium carbonate, mainly from limestone rock, so the pH is slightly alkaline (7-8), except for the red soils, where it is between 6 and 6,5. The organic matter content varies from less than 1 % to a maximum of 1,5 %. In terms of type, the soils are predominantly loam to loamy-sand.

Crete has a Mediterranean coastal climate with mild winters and short hot, dry summers. The temperature typically rises then falls, with a peak in the months of July and August and a minimum in January and February. Winter average temperatures are 12-13 °C, while in summer they are 25-27 °C. Relative humidity is low, ranging between 50 % and 73 %.

The entire island has a long period of low rainfall, lasting 5-6 months. 90 % of the rain falls between October and April.

Sunshine in Crete ranges from 2 500 to 3 000 hours or more, the daily average being 7 to 8,5 hours. June, July and August are the sunniest months.

Climatic conditions, such as those on Crete, contribute to the presence of aromatic constituents in 'Κρήτη / Kriti' extra virgin olive oil. In particular, the intense sunshine and limestone soils contribute to the fruity aroma present in 'Κρήτη / Kriti' olive oil.

The main variety grown in the defined area is the Koroneiki olive. It is a variety that tends to yield exceptionally high-quality olive oil, with high oxidative stability, as demonstrated by its low oxidation indicator values (extinction coefficients, peroxide value).

In addition to the prevailing conditions in the defined area, the human factor plays a very important role in ensuring the quality characteristics of the product. The producers' expertise is based on the traditional cultivation method, which has been passed down from one generation to the next. In particular, producers use rational cultivation techniques and apply integrated management and plant protection methods, such as the use of bait spraying to combat olive fruit fly. In addition, the olives are mainly harvested using hand-held beating machines. Vibration harvesters are not used, as the Koroneiki variety produces a large number of small olives that do not fall from the tree easily on vibration. In addition, the sloping ground in most of the defined area and the high cost of the equipment prevent vibration from being used as a method of harvesting the olives. Moreover, the producers' experience ensures that the olives are harvested at the appropriate time, when the colour of the fruit is changing from greenish yellow to purple-black. It is at this stage that the olives have the highest olive oil content, while the olive oil produced has a high aromatic constituent content, contributing to the fruity aroma of the product. The olives are transported in jute sacks or specially designed crates and are milled immediately, within 48 hours after harvesting.

The rational cultivation technique, effective plant protection using gentle methods, and semi-manual harvesting leads to the production of healthy olives. In combination with the timely and appropriate transport of the olives to the olive mill and their immediate milling within 48 hours after harvesting, the above contribute to the production of quality olive oil with low acidity, low extinction coefficients, a low peroxide value and a high aromatic constituent content, influencing its fruity aroma.

The knowledge and experience of Cretan producers has been passed down from one generation to the next and concerns every stage of production, from cultivation to storage, with a view to avoiding the industrialisation of the product and ensuring its quality.

The producers' constant effort to improve the product is also demonstrated by the School of Agriculture in Messara, which was established as early as 1920. The School has been providing agricultural training to Crete's olive growers for decades, and continues to do so.

At national level, the well-established Pancretan Olive Oil Competition is held in Crete every year. The competition has become an institution in Crete; it takes place in the presence of all stakeholders in the sector from the island and beyond, and enjoys the participation of a large number of producers and olive oils. The competition jury consists of qualified tasters from all four prefectures of Crete and from abroad. In the context of the competition, 'Κρήτη / Kriti' extra virgin olive oil acts as an ambassador for the island's olive production and exports.

The Region of Crete makes continuous efforts to educate and train olive oil producers, providing information booklets entitled *Ο Δεκάλογος της Ποιότητας του Εξαιρετικού Παρθένου Ελαιόλαδου 'Κρήτη/ Kriti'* [Top ten principles to ensure the quality of 'Κρήτη / Kriti' extra virgin olive oil] and *Οδηγός για την παραγωγή εξαιρετικού παρθένου ελαιόλαδου 'Κρήτη/Κriti'* [Guide for the production of 'Κρήτη / Kriti' extra virgin olive oil]. The Region of Crete has also been involved in the quality assurance of 'Κρήτη / Kriti' extra virgin olive oil, among other reasons because of the adverse weather conditions caused by climate change. For that reason, as part of the World Olive Day celebrations, it organised evening events in Heraklion and Chania on the importance of the quality of 'Κρήτη / Kriti' extra virgin olive oil. Speakers included representatives of academia and the business community, and a tasting took place at the end of evening.

In addition, a series of educational actions takes place for olive producers, olive oil processors and olive oil packers, with a view to training them and continuously improving the quality of 'Κρήτη / Kriti' olive oil. In particular, the Region of Crete is implementing an action in cooperation with the Hellenic Mediterranean University and the Hellenic Agricultural Agency Dimitra (ELGO-Dimitra) entitled 'Implementation of specialised actions for the protection, showcasing and promotion of "Κρήτη / Kriti" extra virgin olive oil'. In addition, as part of the continuous education of producers on improving the quality of 'Κρήτη / Kriti' extra virgin olive oil, a training day was organised by the ACR Organoleptic Laboratory of Crete, in cooperation with the Agios Vasilios Agricultural Cooperative, in the village of Melampes, prefecture of Rethymnon.

Cretan extra virgin olive oil is known and held in high esteem for its quality and taste in Greece and abroad. Specifically, its reputation began to take on a global dimension with the 'Seven Countries Study' (Ancel Keys, 1980), which began in the late 1950s and showed that the population of Crete had the lowest mortality from coronary heart disease, a fact which was attributed, *inter alia*, to their regular consumption of large quantities of olive oil. The 'Lyon Heart Study' conducted by Serge Renaud (1988) reached the same conclusion, attributing excellent outcomes to the Cretan dietary model.

The producers' continuous effort to produce a product with the quality characteristics of 'Κρήτη / Kriti' extra virgin olive oil has been recognised through prizes awarded in international competitions. For example:

- Silver and bronze award (2017) in the London International Olive Oil Competition (London IOOC), in the extra virgin olive oil category.
- Silver award (2019) in the EVO International Olive Oil Contest (EVO IOOC), in the organic extra virgin olive oil category.
- Gold award (2019) in the Terraolivo international competition, in the organic extra virgin olive oil category.
- Gold award (2023) in the Berlin Global Olive Oil Awards international competition, as a global elite olive oil.
- Gold award (2023) in the United States International Olive Oil Competition (USIOOC) in Miami, in the extra virgin olive oil category.
- Gold award (2023) in the Anatolian International Olive Oil Competition (Anatolian IOOC), in the monovarietal extra virgin olive oil category.

It should be noted that Crete is the only region in Europe for which a special award – 'Best of Crete' – has been established at the Terraolivo competition, which is held in Israel and is one of the world's largest olive oil competitions.

In addition, the significant reputation of 'Κρήτη / Kriti' olive oil is apparent from numerous professional publications. Specifically, 'Κρήτη / Kriti' olive oil appears in recipes, on restaurant menus and on hotel and restaurant websites, which refer to 'Κρήτη / Kriti' extra virgin olive oil as a key ingredient. Furthermore, on a foreign language site that promotes Greek olive oil (Greek Liquid Gold), the site manager encourages tourists to also visit Crete outside the summer months, to visit oil mills and participate in tastings, while the name 'Κρήτη / Kriti' appears on olive oil packaging.

The product has also been used at various times by well-known chefs and pastry chefs, such as the President of the Chefs' Club of Crete. It is also worth mentioning that, during an evening event entitled "Κρήτη / Kriti" extra virgin olive oil – our island's green gold!, a well-known Cretan chef spoke about its use in professional kitchens.

The product's reputation is also reflected in a bilingual brochure (Greek and English) entitled ΚΡΗΤΙΚΗ ΔΙΑΤΡΟΦΗ – Η κουζίνα της αυθεντικότητας και των αρωμάτων της φύσης, βασισμένη σε αγνά ντόπια υλικά και στο εξαιρετικό παρθένο ελαιόλαδο 'Κρήτη / Kriti' [The Cretan Diet – an authentic cuisine of natural aromas based on pure local ingredients and 'Κρήτη / Kriti' extra virgin olive oil], which can be found at all tourist spots across the island and links Cretan cuisine with the use of 'Κρήτη / Kriti' extra virgin olive oil providing, among other things, information on olive cultivation and recipes for Cretan dishes.

The adoption of the 'Cretan cuisine' label by the Region of Crete Agrifood Partnership is further evidence of the importance of 'Κρήτη / Kriti' extra virgin olive oil. This label is awarded to restaurants on the island that serve Cretan cuisine and cook exclusively with Cretan products.

The product has long been associated with the island of Crete and is inextricably linked to the life and traditions of the island's inhabitants; it has a special place in its folklore, and also in local customs and traditions. There are references to olive oil in local sayings, in the island's religious traditions, in proverbs, and in traditional Cretan *mantinádes* – folk songs consisting of 15-syllable rhyming couplets in Cretan dialect.

Finally, from multiple references in books on the island's history and folklore, it is obvious that olive growing has been a way of life for the island's inhabitants for centuries. One of the most ancient olive trees in the world is located in Crete, near the village of Kavousi; it is estimated to be 3 250 years old. An oil press dating back over 2 500 years has also been discovered in the vicinity. In Crete, hundreds of monumental olive trees of outstanding natural beauty and historical value have been recorded, most notably the olive tree of Vouves in Chania, known as the Olympic olive tree, and the Gortyn olive tree. Also, carbonised olive stones were found in an archaeological dig carried out by Y. and E. Sakellarakis in the area of Fourni, Archanes in Crete (see *Ο πολιτισμός της ελιάς, Το Ελαιόλαδο* [The civilisation founded on the olive – Olive oil] by N. Psilakis, M. Psilaki and I. Kastanas, 2003). The Cretans' link with olive growing and olive oil production is backed up by French scholar Paul Faure's reference (*ibidem*) to the inhabitants of Neolithic Crete as being the first people to grow cultivated olives. The French scholar Paul Faure (*ibidem*) stressed that 'the olive tree ensured Crete's economic dominance over the Aegean part of the Mediterranean'.

Reference to publication of the specification

https://www.minagric.gr/images/stories/docs/agrotis/POP-PGE/2020/prodiagrafes_kriti091224.pdf