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Publication of an application for registration pursuant to Article 15(4) of Regulation (EU) 2024/1143 of the European Parliament and of the Council

(C/2026/688)

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 three months from the date of this publication.

SINGLE DOCUMENT

Designations of origin and geographical indications of agricultural products

'Mothais sur feuille'

EU Ref PDO-FR-03397

Submitted on 1.8.2025

1. **Name(s)**

'Mothais sur feuille'

2. **Geographical indication type**

PDO ☒ PGI ☐

3. **Country to which the defined geographical area belongs**

France

4. **Description of the agricultural product**

4.1. *Classification of the agricultural product in accordance with the Combined Nomenclature heading and code, as referred to in Article 6(1) of Regulation (EU) 2024/1143*

04 – DAIRY PRODUCE; BIRDS' EGGS; NATURAL HONEY; EDIBLE PRODUCTS OF ANIMAL ORIGIN NOT ELSEWHERE SPECIFIED OR INCLUDED

0406 – Cheeses and curds

4.2. *Description of the agricultural product to which the registered name applies*

'Mothais sur feuille' is a soft lactic cheese made exclusively from raw whole goat's milk.

It is dried and matured on a chestnut leaf which leaves an image on the underside of the ripening cheese.

The creased, wrinkled rind is ivory-white. Underneath the leaf, it is barely formed. Blue, grey-blue, white or red mould may occur naturally during ripening.

The paste is white to ivory, smooth, unctuous, melting and very fine-grained.

'Mothais sur feuille' is characterised by milky, yeasty aromas and animal notes to which may be added, after several weeks of ripening, woody aromas such as 'undergrowth', vegetal notes (particularly 'fresh straw' and 'mushroom'), and aromas of dried fruit (particularly 'hazelnut').

[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).

At the end of the minimum ripening period, 'Mothais sur feuille' has the shape of a flat, sometimes slightly truncated cylinder with slightly rounded edges, and weighs at least 180 g.

The total dry extract per piece is at least 65 g and at the most 85 g.

The net weight of the cheese and the dry extract does not include the weight of the leaf.

4.3. *Derogations on sourcing of feed (for products of animal origin designated by a protected designation of origin only) and restrictions on sourcing of raw materials (for processed products designated by a protected geographical indication only)*

At least 85 % in dry matter of the annual amount of feed for the goats in the herd comes from the geographical area.

The geographical area of 'Mothais sur feuille' produces most of the animal's feed, in terms of both fodder and cereals, oilseeds and protein crops. However, due to the absence of dehydration units in the geographical area, livestock producers may occasionally add to the supplementary feed, within a 15 % limit, certain high-protein raw materials which are not produced in the geographical area, such as oilseed cakes or dehydrated lucerne. These limited quantities of concentrated feed produced outside the area do not affect the essential characteristics of the cheese which come from the diet of the goats, due in particular to the mandatory presence of local legumes in the feed, which results in high-quality milk.

The fodder is produced entirely in the geographical area. The feed must be composed of at least 60 % dry fodder.

Fodder must be included in a positive list to be considered as such. It is consumed fresh, as hay. Silaging and wrapping are prohibited.

The annual amount of feed per goat contains at least 200 kilograms of dry matter in the form of lucerne or legumes from the geographical area.

The supplementary feed accounts for a maximum of 40 % of the dry matter in the annual total. Only the raw materials specified in a positive list may be included in the supplementary feed, which is either mixed on the farm or comes in the form of commercial feed supplements.

The various types of feed making up the annual total come from non-transgenic seeds and have a modified DNA level of less than 0,9 %.

The goats in the herd are of the Alpine, Saanen and Poitou breeds and their cross-breeds.

Poitou goat herds may not include animals of less than 75 % Poitou breed.

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

The milk is produced and the cheeses manufactured and ripened in the geographical area.

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

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

Farm cheeses from herds, at least 95 % of whose members belong to the Poitou breed, may be placed on the market with the reference 'Race poitevine' (Poitou breed).

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

Department of Charente: Les Adjots, Barro, Bernac, Bessé, Bioussac, Brettes, Charmé, La Chèvrerie, Condac, Courcôme, Ébréon, Empuré, La Faye, La Forêt-de-Tessé, Les Gours, Londigny, Longré, La Magdeleine, Montjean, Nanteuil-en-Vallée, Paizay-Naudouin-Embourie, Raix, Ruffec, Saint-Fraigne, Saint-Martin-du-Clocher, Salles-de-Villefagnan, Souvigné, Taizé-Aizie, Theil-Rabier, Tusson, Verteuil-sur-Charente, Villefagnan, Villiers-le-Roux.

Department of Charente-Maritime: Benon, Contré, Courçon, Cram-Chaban, Dampierre-sur-Boutonne, Les Éduts, La Grève-sur-Mignon, La Laigne, Néré, Romazières, Saint-Mandé-sur-Brédoire, Saint-Pierre-d'Amilly, Saint-Séverin-sur-Boutonne, Saleignes, La Villedieu, Villiers-Couture, Vinax.

Department of Deux-Sèvres: Aiffres, Aigondigné, Alloinay, Amuré, Arçais, Ardin, Asnières-en-Poitou, Aubigné, Augé, Avon, Azay-le-Brûlé, Beaulieu-sous-Parthenay, Beaussais-Vitré, Beauvoir-sur-Niort, Béceleuf, Bessines, Bougon, Le Bourdet, Brieuil-sur-Chizé, Brioux-sur-Boutonne, Brûlain, Caunay, Celles-sur-Belle, Champdeniers, La Chappelle-Bâton, La Chapelle-Pouilloux, Les Châteliers, Chauray, Chef-Boutonne, Chenay, Chérigné, Cherveux, Chey, Chizé, Clavé, Clussais-la-Pommeraie, Coulon, Coulonges-sur-l'Autize, Couture-d'Argenson, La Crèche, Échiré, Ensigné, Épannes, Exireuil, Exoudun, Faye-sur-Ardin, Fomperron, Fontenille-Saint-Martin-d'Entraigues, Fontivillié, Fors, Les Fosses, La Foye-Monjault, François, Fressines, Frontenay-Rohan-Rohan, Germond-Rouvre, Granzay-Gript, Juillé, Juscorps, Lezay, Limalonges, Lorigné, Loubigné, Loubillé, Luché-sur-Brioux, Lusseray, Magné, Mairé-Levescault, Maisonnay, Marcillé, Marigny, Mauzé-sur-le-Mignon, Mazières-en-Gâtine, Melle, Melleran, Ménigoute, Messé, Montalembert, La Mothe-Saint-Héray, Nanteuil, Niort, Paizay-le-Chapt, Pamproux, Périgné, Pers, Plaine-d'Argenson, Pliboux, Pompaire, Prahecq, Prailles-La Couarde, Prin-Deyrançon, Reffannes, La Rochénard, Rom, Romans, Saint-Christophe-sur-Roc, Saint-Coutant, Sainte-Eanne, Saint-Gelais, Saint-Georges-de-Noisné, Saint-Georges-de-Rex, Saint-Germier, Saint-Hilaire-la-Palud, Saint-Lin, Saint-Maixent-l'École, Saint-Marc-la-Lande, Saint-Martin-de-Bernegoue, Saint-Martin-de-Saint-Maixent, Saint-Maxire, Sainte-Néomaye, Sainte-Ouenne, Saint-Pardoux-Soutiers, Saint-Pompain, Saint-Rémy, Saint-Romans-des-Champs, Saint-Romans-lès-Melle, Sainte-Soline, Saint-Symphorien, Saint Vincent-la-Châtre, Saivres, Salles, Sansais, Sauzé-Vaussais, Sciecq, Secondigné-sur-Belle, Séligné, Sepvret, Soudan, Souvigné, Surin, Valdelaume, Val-du-Mignon, Vallans, Vançais, Le Vanneau-Irleau, Vanzay, Vautebis, Vernoux-sur-Boutonne, Verruyes, Le Vert, Villefollet, Villemain, Villiers-en-Bois, Villiers-en-Plaine, Villiers-sur-Chizé, Vouhé, Vouillé, Xaintray.

Department of Vendée: Benet, Damvix, Le Mazeau, Saint-Sigismond.

Department of Vienne: Anché, Asnois, Blanzay, Brux, Celle-Lévescault, Champagné-le-Sec, Champniers, La Chappelle-Bâton, Charroux, Château-Garnier, Chaunay, Civray, Cloué, Curzay-sur-Vonne, Genouillé, Jazeneuil, Linazay, Lizant, Lusignan, Marçay, Marigny-Chemereau, Romagne, Rouillé, Saint-Gaudent, Saint-Pierre-d'Exideuil, Saint-Romain, Saint-Sauvant, Sanxay, Sommières-du-Clain, Savigné, Surin, Val-de-Comporté, Valence-en-Poitou, Voulême, Voulon.

6. **Link with the geographical area**

The geographical area corresponds to 'Southern Poitou'. It is a transitional zone between the limestone plain of Poitou and the granite and slate bocage of the Vendée, the heart of which is formed to the south of the Deux-Sèvres by the plains of Niort and Aunis, the Mellois plateau and the Mothe-Lezay plain, the 'Mothe' part of which is quite rugged.

The region is formed mainly from Jurassic limestones, frequently giving rise to thin and stony limestone soils referred to as 'groies'. This ensemble is interspersed with small undulating plateaux of red clay formed as a result of the deterioration of Jurassic rock and known locally as the 'terres rouges à châtaignier' (red chestnut earth). The soils there are generally acidic, well-structured and accompanied by some flint. The climate is oceanic and rather mild with frequent water deficits in summer.

In this geographical area, the following have emerged simultaneously as well-established phenomena:

— a particular type of dairy production characterised by a mixed crop/livestock system allowing feed autonomy for the goats, based on leguminous plants such as lucerne, consumed mainly dry or green, and locally produced cereals,

— dynamic and collective production involving farmers, artisans and industry, drawing on special expertise: the processing of raw milk, uncut curd moulded by hand ladling, slow draining, ripening on young chestnut leaves carefully picked and dried in the geographical area.

In his doctoral thesis in geography, Frantz Jénot (2008) describes 'Poitou méridional' (southern Poitou) as 'cultural goat-rearing territory' at the heart of a mixed crop/livestock system.

The marketing of the goat's cheese developed rapidly from the 11th to the 15th century in southern Poitou, with the growing popularity of the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela and its 'Grand Chemin' route (from Paris). It was the many Protestants in the Mellois region who subsequently engaged in the inexpensive practice of goat-rearing and planting chestnut trees, which were known as 'the bread tree', in a bid to prevent famine.

At an early stage, the geographical area also became a centre for pottery production, with around 15 sites from which craftsmen supplied moulds or strainers to cheesemakers.

At the end of the 19th century, the phylloxera crisis led winegrowers to turn to goat farming and dairy production, while local markets and a cooperative system of production started to develop around Mothe-Saint-Héray.

In terms of the goat breeds present in the geographical area, it should be noted that this territory is the birthplace of the Poitou goat. Numbers of this goat breed fell with the foot-and-mouth disease epidemic in the 1920s. From that period onwards, farmers and dairy cooperatives built their herds back up again, mainly with Alpine and Saanen goats.

'Mothais sur feuille' is a soft cheese made exclusively from raw whole goat's milk.

The cheese forms a flat cylinder, sometimes a little truncated, with slightly rounded edges.

It is dried and matured on a chestnut leaf which leaves an image on the underside of the ripening cheese.

It has a yeasty, sometimes creased rind and ranges in colour from pale beige to blue. The paste looks fine, soft and smooth, and is unctuous with a very melt-in-the-mouth texture.

When ripened on chestnut leaves, 'Mothais sur feuille' acquires notes which are at first milky and yeasty, and then become more animal, sometimes with additional woody, vegetal and dried fruit aromas.

In an environment which has been historically favourable to goat farming, natural and human factors have led to a specific type of goat's cheese production. The 'groies' limestone soils favourable for leguminous plants and cereals have allowed mixed crop farms which ensure feed autonomy for the herds. This feed results in the production of milk of very high cheese-making quality.

At the same time, the particular environment has given the cheese its identifying characteristics. Firstly, the presence of clay in some areas has traditionally allowed many potters to produce terracotta moulds or strainers which have given the cheese its shape. Today, these moulds have been replaced by the plastic moulds commonly used in cheese-making, while keeping the original shape. Secondly, the presence of islets of relative acidic red soil is good for chestnut trees, whose leaves are picked and dried using local know-how to guarantee the brown colour and cleanliness of the leaves. This know-how relates to choosing the right date on which to harvest the leaves in order to obtain the desired colour, adopting a harvesting technique which avoids all contact with the ground and a threading storage technique to facilitate natural drying and the proper preservation of the leaves.

Lastly, the soil and climate and the multi-species meadowland which allows for the production of 'Mothais sur feuille' using raw milk are conducive to the presence and development of flora specific to the cheese, in particular *Geotrichum candidum*, which is what makes the paste smooth and creamy.

Furthermore, the slow draining of the curd obtained from the raw milk also contributes to the considerable development of *Geotrichum candidum* (fermentation), allowing 'Mothais sur Feuille' to give off milky, yeasty aromas as of 12 days.

The unctuous character of the paste is enhanced by the moisture regulation (drainage and humidity maintenance) provided by the chestnut leaf during the ripening period. The chestnut leaf also plays an important role in the presentation and identity of the product and has helped to develop its reputation.

Throughout history, this cheese has been referred to in the local markets as being 'sur feuille' ('on the leaf') and has been called 'Mothais' or 'fromage de la Mothe' in newspapers or books and by cheesemongers in cities far from the local area.

Thanks to the railway lines, the cheeses can be transported quickly to the towns of Niort, Poitiers, Bordeaux and Paris. In the newspaper 'Le Mellois' on 7 January 1866, we learn that cheeses from the region of Mothe-Saint-Héray had just been awarded a prize at the Paris Exhibition. In these distant towns, as in the press, the geographical origin of the cheese is important.

In 1953, in the book 'Fromages de France', Curnonsky refers to 'the leaf-wrapped goat's cheese produced in the region of Mothe-Saint-Héray and Melle and measuring 10 to 13 cm for a weight of around 220 g'. A little later, in 1972, Pierre Androuet lists 'le Mothais ou chèvre à la feuille appelé aussi la Mothe-Saint-Héray fermier' ('Mothais or leaf-wrapped goat's cheese, also known as Mothe-Saint-Héray farm cheese') in the 'Guide du fromage'.

In the 1970s, a growing number of farm producers started to redevelop this production. At the end of the 1980s, producers in the geographical area started to call their cheese 'Mothais sur feuille'. In 1989, the Association Centrale des Laiteries Coopératives (Central Association of Cooperative Dairies) requested that the trade mark 'Mothais sur feuille' be registered with the INPI (National Institute for Industrial Property) in 1989.

Around the 1990s, 'Mothais sur feuille' officially entered regional competitions, and was recognised as a category in its own right.

Reference to the publication of the product specification of the geographical indication

https://extranet.inao.gouv.fr/fichier/CDC-Mothaissfeuille-250624.pdf