

## COMMISSION IMPLEMENTING DECISION

of 28 July 2023

**on the publication in the *Official Journal of the European Union* of the application for registration of a name referred to in Article 49 of Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council 'Irish Grass Fed Beef' (PGI)**

(2023/C 275/13)

THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION,

Having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,

Having regard to Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council on quality schemes for agricultural products and foodstuffs <sup>(1)</sup>, and in particular Article 50(2)(a) thereof,

Whereas:

- (1) Pursuant to Article 50(2)(a) of Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012, the application from Ireland to register the name 'Irish Grass Fed Beef' as Protected Geographical Indication was published in the *Official Journal of the European Union* <sup>(2)</sup>.
- (2) On 21 February 2022 the Commission received the notice of opposition including the related reasoned statement of opposition from the United Kingdom (Northern Ireland). The opposition was deemed admissible. Ireland and the United Kingdom (Northern Ireland) carried out appropriate consultations and reached an agreement substantially amending the single document.
- (3) In accordance with Article 51 of Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012 Ireland sent to the Commission the documents and the information relevant to the agreement reached with the United Kingdom (Northern Ireland) in the opposition procedure concerning the application for registration of the name 'Irish Grass Fed Beef' as protected geographical indication, including the substantially amended single document.
- (4) In accordance with Article 50 and 51(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012 the Commission has examined that application and concluded that it fulfils the conditions laid down in that Regulation.
- (5) In order to allow for the submission of notices of opposition in accordance with Article 51 of Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012, the single document and the reference to the publication of the product specification referred to in Article 50(2)(a) of that Regulation for the name 'Irish Grass Fed Beef' should be published in the *Official Journal of the European Union*,

HAS DECIDED AS FOLLOWS:

*Sole Article*

The single document and the reference to the publication of the product specification referred to in Article 50(2)(a) of Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012 for the name 'Irish Grass Fed Beef' (PGI) (EU No: PGI-IE+UK(NI)-02647 — 27.11.2020) shall be published in the *Official Journal of the European Union*.

In accordance with Article 51 of Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012, the publication referred in the first paragraph of this Article shall confer the right to oppose to the registration of the name 'Irish Grass Fed Beef'.

<sup>(1)</sup> OJ L 343, 14.12.2012, p. 1.

<sup>(2)</sup> OJ C 492, 8.12.2021, p. 12.

Done at Brussels, 28 July 2023.

*For the Commission*  
Janusz WOJCIECHOWSKI  
*Member of the Commission*

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## ANNEX

## SINGLE DOCUMENT

**'Irish Grass Fed Beef'****EU No: PGI-IE+UK(NI)-02647 – 27.11.2020****PDO ( ) PGI (X)****1. Name(s) (of PDO or PGI)**

'Irish Grass Fed Beef'

**2. Member State or Third Country**

Ireland

United Kingdom (Northern Ireland)

**3. Description of the agricultural product or foodstuff****3.1. Type of product [listed in Annex XI]**

*Class 1.1 Fresh meat (and offal)*

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

'Irish Grass Fed Beef' is the name given to fresh and frozen bone-in and boneless beef, including carcasses, quarters, bone-in cuts, boneless primal, minced beef of those cuts, and retail packs.

'Irish Grass Fed Beef' has (i) low overall fat levels (ii) an even distribution of fat (as intermuscular marbling); (iii) a pronounced cherry-red meat colour; and (iv) a high degree of creaminess/yellowness of fat. It has a rich, complex, grassy, succulent, and juicy meat with a true beefy flavour and is tender.

Carcasses must be from the following two categories:

- i. Steers and heifers aged up to 36 months with conformation better than O- and fat score between 2+ and 4+;
- ii. Beef cows of up to 120 months with conformation better than O+ and with fat score between 2+ and 5.

'Irish Grass Fed Beef' from category (i.) exhibits all the attributes in relation to a cherry-red meat colour and a cream/yellow fat colour, and external fat levels as described.

'Irish Grass Fed Beef' described in category (ii.) has an even more pronounced yellow fat and with deeper red meat colour than the steer and heifer category. Average fat levels are higher than in category (i.). High pH (>5.8) carcasses are identified and excluded.

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

'Irish Grass Fed Beef' only includes cattle that:

- a) Derive at least 90 % of their feed intake from grass. This is primarily grazed grass, with winter feeding of conserved grass.
- b) Spend a minimum of 220 days per year throughout their lifetime grazing pasture. Each year, as soon as conditions permit, 'Irish Grass Fed Beef' cattle are sent to pasture and spend up to 10 months, of entire days, grazing grass. Typically, cattle are housed in late November/early December when weather and ground conditions no longer facilitate active grass growth and/or grazing. A tolerance of up to 40 days is allowed due to mitigating circumstances, defined as: where weather, soil condition, other environmental conditions or animal welfare considerations are impeding factors.

Conserved Grass is only fed during the housing period (maximum (\*)145 days). The nutritional quality of Conserved Grass is assessed by all producers. Cattle can be fed non-grass forage (e.g. Straw; Fodder Beet; Maize; other Grains) and concentrated feedstuff but this is restricted to a maximum of 10 % feed intake over the animal's lifetime. These non-grass feeds are only used when necessary, e.g. at weaning, during winter, extreme weather episodes and during the final finishing period, but only where the nutritional quality of the grass/grass forage is insufficient to ensure optimum meat eating quality. All conserved grass must be harvested in the geographical area.

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

Cattle must be born, raised on grass, finished, slaughtered, chilled, and quartered within the geographical area.

The meat maturation process (a minimum of 3 days or in the case of speciality manufacturing cuts, 2 days), which is essential to ensure the eating quality of 'Irish Grass Fed Beef' takes place within the geographical area.

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

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

Products that may be labelled as PGI 'Irish Grass Fed Beef'

- Fresh and frozen bone-in and boneless beef, including carcasses, quarters, bone in cuts, boneless primal cuts, and retail packs, from qualifying categories of beef cattle.
- Minced beef containing 100 % beef sourced from qualifying categories of beef cattle and containing a minimum of 90 % visual lean beef.
- Minced beef products(e.g. Burgers) containing 100 % beef sourced from qualifying categories of beef cattle and containing a minimum of 90 % visual lean beef.

Products that may be labelled 'as derived' from PGI 'Irish Grass Fed Beef'

- Composite beef products containing 100 % beef sourced from qualifying categories of 'Irish Grass Fed Beef' cattle and containing a minimum of 90 % visual lean beef.
- Premium Offal (Cheek, Tail, Thick-Skirt and Tongue) sourced from qualifying categories of 'Irish Grass Fed Beef' cattle.

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

The geographical area is the island of Ireland comprising of Ireland and Northern Ireland <sup>(1)</sup>.

5. **Link with the geographical area**

The causal link between the product and the area in which it is produced is based on its consistently high eating quality which in turn has led to a well-established reputation. 'Irish Grass Fed Beef' has established a reputation amongst European consumers, retailers, chefs, journalists, and opinion leaders, which is based on a pasture grazing and grass forage production system that is employed to raise and 'finish' the qualifying categories of beef animals, processed to a strict protocol, resulting in a meat with a differentiated visual appearance and renowned eating quality.

*Specificities of the geographical area : natural factors and know how*

The island of Ireland's unique dependence on grass-based agriculture, and its grass growing potential has been recognised for centuries. Cattle rearing has long been recognised an integral part of the Irish economy.

(\*) See also Section 3.3 b)

(1) References to the 'island' includes smaller islands of Ireland and Northern Ireland.

The geographical area has a temperate climate, winters are mild, harsh frosts are rare, as are high summer temperatures. The prevalent, moist, westerly winds from the warm waters of the Gulf Stream ensure that the island has a markedly oceanic climate with frequent rain (up to 246 rain days/year) and a low annual temperature range (rarely below 0°C or higher than 25°C). Irish grassland can produce some of the highest non-irrigated herbage yields (12-16 t dry matter (DM)/ha per annum) in Europe.

The Irish beef herd differs from other beef systems, as it results from the practice of crossing traditional breeds (e.g. Hereford, Angus and Shorthorn) with both dairy breeds (with strong maternal traits) and Continental European beef breeds (e.g. Limousin, Charolais and Simmental). The resultant hardy, crossbred animal is optimally adapted to finish on the varied climatic and geographical conditions of the geographical area.

Integrated agricultural education and strong on-farm support provides access to cutting edge scientific research, allowing farmers to achieve maximum advantage for their beef cattle from the grasslands. Services are available to all farmers and new entrants to farming. This scientific support is an important input in the continuous improvement in eating quality of 'Irish Grass Fed Beef'. While the primary focus is the production of a visually distinctive and superior tasting beef, recent industry initiatives also assist the 'Irish Grass Fed Beef' producer to focus on reducing the carbon footprint of their beef enterprise.

'Irish Grass Fed Beef' farms are central to the Irish rural landscape and communities. Historically, the structure is built up around small to medium residential farm holdings, which have been handed down inter-generationally. In this structure, the farmstead is centrally located to the grazing and forage areas for the livestock allowing regular visual assessment of livestock ('herding') and a continuous focus on the animals wellbeing which is a significant contributor to meat eating quality.

To this day, this rural patchwork is a recognised feature of the Irish landscape. While the Irish Grass Fed Beef production model is not exclusive to family farms and does not exclude new entrants, over 99 % of farms can be classified as 'family farms' <sup>(2)</sup>, <sup>(3)</sup>. However, intensive feedlot operations employing industrial farming methods, without evidence of the family farm type pasture based and grass fed practices, are not eligible for the production of 'Irish Grass Fed Beef'.

A traditional beef production system based around extensive pasture rearing, persists on 'Irish Grass Fed Beef' farms. Data indicate an average land availability of over 3,000 sq. metres per animal. The farming system has been derived from herds built up and stockmanship skills handed down, over generations. This process has preserved the knowledge and experience in beef production, both of which are sensitive to the local geographic and climatic conditions as well as animals' welfare requirements. Pasture based beef is associated internationally with better animal welfare, less stress and improved animal health.

Moreover grazed grass and all grass based winter forage are from the geographical area.

'Irish Grass Fed Beef' production systems prioritise:

- the greatest possible weight gain from grazed grass,
- the harvesting of surplus summer grass at its optimum growing stage (May/June) to produce high-quality winter feed, thus
- maximising the Dry Matter Digestibility (DMD) of this conserved grass. This is essential in order to ensure that grass silage can provide the vast majority of the animal's winter nutritional requirements.

Recent studies have confirmed that 'Irish Grass Fed Beef' has significantly higher concentrations of beneficial minerals and vitamins including: Calcium, Manganese, Iron, Zinc, Selenium, Sodium, Magnesium, Potassium, Phosphorus and Vitamin E than non or low-grass feed systems.

<sup>(2)</sup> In Ireland, a 2016 Farm Structures Survey published by the Irish Central Statistics Office classified 99.6 % of Irish Farms as Family farms." Family farms are operated as family based enterprises (including any registered as commercial concerns)". (Ref. CSO). Family farm type pasture based and grass fed practices must be evident for PGI purposes

<sup>(3)</sup> In Northern Ireland, the EU Farm Structure Survey 2016 showed farms are primarily family run businesses, with 99 % of farm managers being farm occupiers, spouses and other family members.

*Specificity of Product*

The links between the land, people and animals show the importance placed on herdsmanhip, the small family farm, local know how and grassland management by 'Irish Grass Fed Beef' farmers and give the following specificities to the meat.

It has been found that 'Irish Grass Fed Beef' have specific nutritional properties that differentiate them from non or low-grass feed systems: 'Irish Grass Fed Beef' has a lower saturated fatty acid profile and higher levels of omega 3 than beef from cattle fed from non or low-grass feed systems. Research also found that the differences in fatty acid content will give grass-fed beef a distinct grass flavour and unique cooking qualities such as more complex, 'nutty' undertones.

Both categories of 'Irish Grass Fed Beef' are visually different in terms of meat and fat colour from beef produced in non or low-grass fed systems.

A recent study found that the subcutaneous fat of 'Irish Grass Fed Beef' cattle is around 63 % more yellow than that of cereal concentrate-fed animals. The higher yellowness can be related to higher levels of carotenoids (e.g. beta-carotene and lutein) in pasture from the geographical area than in cereal concentrates.

The muscle colour in 'Irish Grass Fed Beef' is reported to be darker (deeper red) than that of cereal concentrate fed animals.

The flavour which is rich, complex, grassy and juicy and properties of 'Irish Grass Fed Beef' are a consequence of the predominantly outdoor, traditional pasture grazing system where animals spend over 220 days (\*) of the year at pasture and consume over 90 % of their diet as grass from the geographical area.

Meat tenderness (texture) is one of the most important organoleptic properties influencing acceptability and eating satisfaction of meat products for consumers. The high tenderness associated with 'Irish Grass Fed Beef' is achieved because the pre-slaughter handling of livestock and post slaughter chilling and maturation of carcasses and cuts follows an exacting blueprint which Irish farmers and processors follow meticulously. This allows the natural fibre maturation/ decomposition process to occur resulting in greater tenderness and an accentuation of the natural flavours of the beef. It is also achieved thanks to proven meat technology and controlled maturation process that enhance tenderness and eliminates the risk of cold shortening is used. High pH (>5.8) carcasses are identified and excluded.

*Causal link: Reputation*

The links between the land, people, and animals, combined with the human factors associated with the region's traditional herdsmanhip, the Irish farming system and the grassland management techniques practised by 'Irish Grass Fed Beef' farmers creates 'Irish Grass Fed Beef'.

This results in a differentiated high quality, tender beef with a unique appearance, flavour, and nutritional profile. These properties are highly valued by consumers, chefs, and food buyers.

'Irish Grass Fed Beef' has established two distinct premium markets, based on regional culinary differences and preferences:

- i. 'Irish Grass Fed Beef' from steers and heifers has found favour in various markets including the Netherlands, Germany, Belgium, and Luxemburg; it is positioned in these markets at a premium price.
- ii. 'Irish Grass Fed Beef' from qualifying cows has been the beef of choice in areas of Europe with a preference for richer, highly flavoured beef from mature animals (e.g. France and Northern Spain). This market niche has expanded substantially recently, as evidenced by the high-end culinary trend towards 'mature' cow beef (e.g. Galician) among leading European chefs.

Consumer research confirms the clear visual, taste and compositional differences between 'Irish Grass Fed Beef' and beef from non-or-low grass feed systems. Taste tests were carried out in 2011 in three European markets (Germany, the Netherlands, and Italy) to establish the consumer perception of the eating quality of 'Irish Grass Fed Beef', which was judged against competitors. Across all three markets 'Irish Grass Fed Beef' scored higher on taste intensity, texture, and balance of fat cover/marbling in the meat.

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(\*) See also Section 3.3. b).

'Irish Grass Fed Beef' is described as having a differentiated and specific eating quality by various professionals:

- 'a rich flavour'
- 'succulent'
- 'some of the world's tastiest beef'.

Tenderness is also appreciated:

- 'conquered by the quality (and) tenderness...of this meat'
- 'meat is extremely tender'

Irish steaks, in the Grass Fed Category, won more medals than any other country 2018 and 2019 World Steak Challenge. In 2019, when assessed by expert tasting panels against steak from 25 countries, striploins, rib eyes and fillets from 'Irish Grass Fed Beef' won a record 83 medals, more than any other competing country, including the World's Best Fillet. A further 85 medals were won in the 2021 World Steak Challenge, of which 52 were gold.

'High Marbling from grass fed beef – Wonderful.' 'Tender and flavoursome, lightly nutty, short fibres, low acidity, extremely juicy – Wow'. Judges' comments on 'Irish Grass Fed Beef' winning World's Best Steak Contest, BEEF Magazine, 2009.

'Irish Grass Fed Beef' features at many leading restaurants around the world. The CIBC (Chefs Irish Beef Club) with nine chapters in Europe and internationally has over 100 participating chefs who chose to use and endorse 'Irish Grass Fed Beef' as their beef of choice. An International gathering of CIBC chefs and Bocuse d'Or winners (June 2013) heard numerous endorsements of 'Irish Grass Fed Beef' including:

- Mario Corti, Chef, Germany: 'I like the grass-fed beef and for me the Irish grass-fed beef is the best you can find actually...'
- Jean-Paul Jeunet, Chef: 'I want the best for my guests and in Ireland you have the grass and you have the climate and all of the year the beef are outside – it is very interesting.'

#### **Reference to publication of the specification**

<https://assets.gov.ie/202726/824a7d14-f441-4bf4-95d1-6b33a55af041.pdf>

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