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 353/08)

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

SINGLE DOCUMENT

COUNCIL REGULATION (EC) No 510/2006

on the protection of geographical indications and designations of origin for agricultural products and foodstuffs [2]

'PIRANSKA SOL'

EC No: SI-PDO-0005-01098-27.02.2013

PGI ( ) PDO (X)

1. **Name**

'Piranska sol'

2. **Member State or Third Country**

Slovenia

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

3.1. *Type of product*

Class 1.8. Other products of Annex I to the Treaty (spices, etc.)

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

'Piranska sol' is sea salt obtained exclusively from the Sečovlje and Strunjan saltpans, produced on a natural base of algae and minerals known as 'petola', which has a significant impact on the colour and quality of Piran salt. Production is based on a tradition stretching back over 700 years, with the salt gathered on a daily basis, manually only and using just traditional tools. The daily raking of the salt enables 'Piranska sol' to develop as smaller, less dense crystals, the size of which generally does not exceed 6,3 mm.

When crystallising, the salt forms into white to grey crystals, potentially with some residual impurities of natural origin. The method of collection means the salt crystals are delicate and dissolve quickly. When ground, the salt grains have a distinct aroma of the sea.

'Piranska sol' fleur de sel crystallises on the surface of the brine in the crystallisation basins, which gives it its characteristic crystalline structure, which retains some of the seawater. The shape of the fleur de sel crystals and the brine they contain make them dissolve quickly.

[1] OJ L 343, 14.12.2012, p. 1.
[2] OJ L 93, 31.3.2006, p. 12. Replaced by Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012.

Parameter	Value	Unit
Bulk density before storage	max.	950 kg/m^3
NaCl (based on dry weight)	min.	95 %
Mg^{2+}	min.	0,2 %
Ca^{2+}	min.	0,1 %
Lead (Pb)	<	2 mg/kg
Cadmium (Cd)	<	0,5 mg/kg
Arsenic (As)	<	0,5 mg/kg
Mercury (Hg)	<	0,1 mg/kg
Copper (Cu)	<	2 mg/kg

3.3. *Raw materials (for processed products only)*

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3.4. *Feed (for products of animal origin only)*

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

Every step in the production of 'Piranska sol', from the use of the basic saltpan structure, the preparation of the 'petola', processing of salt (filling the saltpan basins, producing brine, crystallisation, hand raking, decanting, drying, grinding and sieving) has to take place within the identified geographical area.

3.6. *Specific rules concerning slicing, grating, packaging, etc.*

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3.7. *Specific rules concerning labelling*

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4. Concise definition of the geographical area

'Piranska sol' is produced in the geographical area of the Sečovlje Salina nature park and the Strunjan Nature Reserve in the municipalities of Piran and Izola on the Slovenian coast.

5. Link with the geographical area

5.1. *Specificity of the geographical area*

The climate of the geographical area is sub-Mediterranean. Given their terrain and the openness of the bay and valleys to the main winds, both saltpans enjoy a better balance between rainfall and daily evaporation than surrounding areas. The most important winds are the warm mistral which blows from the sea up the valley during the day, and the bora, which blows in the opposite direction at night.

The base of the saltpans is formed from recent sediment — an organic clay silt — deposited in Sečovlje by the Dragonja river and in Strunjan by a stream known as the Roja. This sediment is the main material used to build the banks and channels that form the saltpans. The bottom of the evaporation basins is clay, while the crystallisation basins have a clay base formed from recent sediment that allows a high quality layer of 'petola' to be cultivated on it. The 'petola' is a special feature of the Sečovlje and Strunjan saltpans.

The first written record of the Piran saltpans goes back to 804. Piran's town charter from 1274, of which only some sections remain, includes a number of regulations on the saltpans and highlights the town's right to produce and trade in salt. The Piran Statute of 1358 includes the statement that reconstruction was needed due to the brown colouring that clay had given to 'Piranska sol'. With the help of salt workers from the island of Pag, salt started to be produced on a 'petola', which improved the quality of the salt, making it purer and whiter.

Instability in the early 18th century led to the decline of the Piran saltpans after 300 years of progress and development. In the 19th century, the saltpans came under Austro-Hungarian administration, which benefited the saltpans by ending production restrictions, increasing the sale price of the salt and introducing the mandatory purchase of all the salt produced, restoring the saltpans to their dominant position. After the fall of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, the saltpans came under Italian and later Yugoslav administration.

5.2. *Specificity of the product*

One of the features of 'Piranska sol' is that its production respects a tradition that goes back over 700 years.

The main characteristic of 'Piranska sol' is that it is produced on the 'petola', a base that is prepared from the end of the previous season until the start of salt crystallisation, which demands a precise sequence of procedures including providing the right basis for the 'petola' itself. The 'petola' is a 1 cm-thick, artificially cultivated crust comprising cyanobacteria, gypsum, carbonates and, to a lesser extent, clay as well. The 'petola' plays a dual role — first, it prevents the salt mixing with the sea-mud below it, leading to purer and whiter salt, and second, it acts as a biological filter that prevents heavy metal traces from settling in the salt crystals. The 'petola' must be level so that the layer of brine above it remains shallow and of a consistent depth.

Another feature of 'Piranska sol' is that it is collected daily by means of the manual raking of the crystals, which are raked into small conical piles. Raking the crystals daily using a traditional tool (a wooden rake called a 'gavero') prevents the crystals from forming the thick hardened layer that is typical of mechanically collected sea salt. This allows crystals to form in a way that often retains a little of the original seawater and makes them lighter and more delicate, with a crystal size generally no greater than 6,3 mm. 'Piranska sol' is not refined or rinsed, so its mineral composition is naturally balanced and it has no additives.

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)*

Historically, the development of techniques to produce salt from seawater has persisted with basins for gradual evaporation. The basic technology is still the same today, with the differences between individual saltpans in the Mediterranean being largely due to climate, geology and local environmental conditions. The most notable differences are in the method of collecting or harvesting the salt in crystallisation basins, where the development of the process depends primarily on the microclimate of the specific saltpans. Under favourable climatic conditions, a continual crystallisation process can be used, while at the other end of the spectrum — such as the Piran saltpans, for example — poor climatic conditions with the risk of summer thunderstorms and heavy precipitation mean that the salt must be harvested every day. The traditional production of 'Piranska sol' has undergone several changes over the history of the saltpans, but the daily harvesting of salt has developed and continued as a result of the climatic conditions and the many years of experience of the salt workers. The daily gathering of salt means the layer of salt crystals at the bottom of the basin is only a few millimetres thick, just the thickness of the salt crystals themselves. The daily raking method gives the salt its characteristic crystalline form, which often retains the original seawater within. 'Piranska sol' crystals are lighter and more delicate than sea salt crystals that have formed into a hardened layer.

The production of 'Piranska sol' involves the use of traditional manual techniques when working with clay and when preparing the base for the 'petola' and cultivating and maintaining it. Wooden tools are used that are not chemically treated or coated. A very light tool is used to harvest fleur de sel.

In calm weather, the fleur de sel crystallises on the surface of the crystallisation basins in the form of a thin, delicate crust. The crystals have a markedly pyramidic structure that retains some water, which enables them to dissolve more rapidly.

In the 14th century, the Pag saltpans were more modern than those of Piran, and were known for their white salt, which was produced on the base known as 'petola'. At that time, salt from the Piran saltpans had a brown tinge from the clay, so the Pag salt workers gained permission to construct saltpans in Piran in the same way as Pag, using a 'petola' to produce the salt (Piran Statute, 1358). The traditional process for preparing the 'petola' on a clay base — which in Sečovlje comes largely from the Dragonja river and in Strunjan from the Roja stream, from the hilly flysh hinterland of the Šavrinski Gričevje — was one of the major developments in the 14th century, and has significantly influenced the quality and colour of the salt produced. Since then, 'Piranska sol' has been prized as an important commercial product across a wide geographical region due to its purity and whiteness, and the absence of clay residues.

The production of 'Piranska sol' is nearly all by hand. Historically, generations of smallholding farming families from around the saltpans and inhabitants of Piran adapted their lives to the seasonal work of the saltpans, handing their knowledge down through the generations. That experience and knowledge, from maintaining the whole local saltpan environment, the specific techniques for preparing the salt basins, especially the regular, year-round procedures to produce the 'petola', the method of collecting the salt produced, and moving, filling and replenishing the basins with the right quantities and concentrations of brine, has all significantly contributed to the final quality and characteristics of 'Piranska sol'.

The reputation and high quality of 'Piranska sol' has been confirmed by a wide range of literature, brochures and articles that have appeared in Slovenian and foreign press (including *Gambero Rosso*, *New Western Cuisine*, *the Slovenia Times*, *WaSaBi*, and *the New York Times*).

The production of 'Piranska sol' has taken place in symbiosis with its surroundings throughout history, and added natural and cultural value to that environment.

Reference to publication of the specification

(Article 5(7) of Regulation (EC) No 510/2006 ([3]))

http://www.mko.gov.si/fileadmin/mko.gov.si/pageuploads/podrocja/Varna_in_kakovostna_hrana_in_krma/zasciteni_kmetijski_pridelki/Specifikacije/Piranska_sol_spec-nova_potrjena_2012.pdf

([3]) See footnote 2.