

OTHER ACTS

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Publication of an amendment 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

(2018/C 135/07)

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⁾.

APPLICATION FOR APPROVAL OF NON-MINOR AMENDMENTS TO THE PRODUCT SPECIFICATION FOR A PROTECTED DESIGNATION OF ORIGIN OR PROTECTED GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATION

Application for approval of amendments in accordance with the first subparagraph of Article 53(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012**'BLEU DES CAUSSES'****EU No: PDO-FR-0108-AM02 — 31.3.2017****PDO (X) PGI ()****1. Applicant group and legitimate interest**

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The applicant group for 'Bleu des Causses' is composed of 'Bleu des Causses' PDO operators (producers, collectors, processors and ripeners) and has a legitimate interest in submitting the application.

2. Member State or Third Country

France

3. Heading in the product specification affected by the amendment(s)

- Name of product
- Description of product
- Geographical area
- Proof of origin
- Method of production
- Link
- Labelling
- Other: inspection, link, inspection bodies

4. Type of amendment(s)

- Amendments to the product specification of a registered PDO or PGI not to be qualified as minor within the meaning of the third subparagraph of Article 53(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012
- Amendments to the product specification of a registered PDO or PGI for which a Single Document (or equivalent) has not been published and which cannot be qualified as minor within the meaning of the third subparagraph of Article 53(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 343, 14.12.2012, p. 1.

5. Amendment(s)

Heading ‘Description of product’

The description of the product has been supplemented to make it more precise:

- the words ‘cow’s milk cheese’ have been replaced by the words ‘cheese made exclusively from cow’s milk’ so as to avoid any ambiguity,
- the word ‘renneted’ has been added with reference to the manufacturing method,
- the words ‘fermented and salted’ have been added to describe the paste.

The minimum fat content of the cheese after total desiccation has been increased to 50 grams of fat per 100 grams of cheese after total desiccation (or 50 %) instead of 45 % as a result of the larger share of fat in the milk and the use of whole milk to make ‘Bleu des Causses’. It has been regularly found that the fat content of ‘Bleu des Causses’ after total desiccation exceeds 50 %.

Therefore the sentences “Bleu des Causses” is an unpressed, uncooked, fermented and salted blue-veined cheese made exclusively from renneted, non-skimmed cow’s milk. It has a minimum fat content of 50 grams per 100 grams of cheese after total desiccation and its dry matter content must not be less than 53 grams for 100 grams of cheese.’ replace the following sentence in the current specification ‘Bleu des Causses is an unpressed, uncooked blue-veined cheese made from non-skimmed cow’s milk, with a fat content of 45 % in the dry matter, the latter being at least 53 grams per 100 grams of cheese.’.

The diameter of the cheese ranges between 19 and 21 centimetres. These more precise figures replace the words ‘approximately 20 centimetres’. The maximum height has been increased by two centimetres to reach a height of 12 centimetres (instead of 10), and the weight range has been expanded slightly: it has been set between 2,2 and 3,3 kilograms instead of 2,3 and 3 kilograms. These figures reflect more accurately the actual sizes of the cheeses. Finally, it has been added that the cheese is ‘regular in shape’ in order to prevent defects in the shape of the cheeses.

A description of the taste, paste and texture has been added: ‘The paste is ivory-white, uniform in colour, smooth, fine, with evenly distributed blue-green marbling and possible needlehole traces. It has a smooth and tender texture. The taste is clean, flavoursome, with aromas characteristic of blue cheese; it may have a slight bitterness without excessive pungency or too much salt’. This description is useful for the organoleptic examination of the product during inspection.

The sentence ‘The designation of origin “Bleu des Causses” may not be used until the 70th day after renneting’ has been added to replace the sentence ‘The total ripening period varies from 70 to 130 days, depending on the cheesemakers and ripeners’ under the ‘Method of production’ section of the current specification. No change has been made to the minimum age required to qualify for the PDO. It has now been specified that the age is calculated from the renneting date. The maximum ripening period of 130 days, which was indicative, has been deleted.

It has been specified that ‘The cutting of “Bleu des Causses” is authorised if it does not alter the cheese’s texture. “Bleu des Causses” may be presented in pieces that have been cut mechanically’. Given the continuous changes in the ways cheese is consumed, this provision establishes a framework preventing deviations as regards the type of cut.

Heading ‘Definition of the geographical area’

The paragraphs ‘The production area covers the Causses region, in other words, a part of the department of Aveyron and of the neighbouring departments of Lot, Lozère, Gard and Hérault having the character of limestone plateaux (“causses”) and ‘The cheese is ripened in cellars in the Causses in the geographical area delimited by the cantons of Campagnac, Cornus, Millau, Peyreleau and Saint-Affrique (Aveyron) and the municipalities of Trèves (Gard) and Pégairolles-de-l’Escalette (Hérault)’ in the specification and the related paragraphs of the published summary have been deleted and replaced by the paragraphs ‘The milk is produced and “Bleu des Causses” cheeses made, ripened and matured in the geographical area, which forms a mosaic of terrains issued from magmatic, metamorphic or calcareous rocks. Limestone plateaux are characteristic features of this landscape. They are particular in that they occasionally provide natural cellars having fractures that naturally regulate the humidity and ventilation of the cellar. These cavities are particularly suited to the ripening of “Bleu des Causses”, which has been carried out in the area for a long time’ and ‘The geographical area of the designation of origin “Bleu des Causses” covers practically all of the department of Aveyron and part of the departments of Lot, Lozère, Gard and Hérault’, which are more precise and make it possible to present concisely the geographical area, of which the limestone plateaux are characteristic features. No changes have been made to the boundaries of the geographical area.

In order to describe the geographical area precisely and without ambiguity, the municipalities that compose it have been listed in the specification. That description reproduces the one referred to more concisely in the published summary. The drafting work identified an omission in the description of the geographical area in the current specification. Five municipalities of the department of Aveyron were missing, although they are located in the heart of the geographical area: Druelle-Balsac, Luc-la-Primaube, Le Monastère, Olemps and Sainte-Radegonde. These municipalities have been added to the specification. This is a correction of a material error that does not call into question the link between the product and its geographical origin.

Heading ‘Evidence that the product originates from the geographical area’

Reporting obligations

An identification declaration for operators has been provided for to replace the declaration of suitability. Identifying the operators is a prerequisite for their accreditation, which recognises that they are able to meet the requirements of the specification for the designation from which they wish to benefit.

Prior declarations of having no intention to produce and of resuming production have also been added, enabling close monitoring of operators who wish to withdraw for a short period from the designation of origin. This makes it easier to manage the designation of origin, in particular as regards production checks and organoleptic tests.

The content and the means of submission of the declarations necessary for recognition and monitoring of the products to be marketed with the designation of origin have been added. They enable the group to monitor the designation.

Registries

The list of the registrations which operators must carry out has been added so as to facilitate checks on traceability and the production conditions laid down by the specification.

Heading ‘Method of obtaining the product’

Milk production

A definition of the dairy herd has been added, as follows: ‘all the dairy cows and replacement heifers present on the holding’, it being noted that ‘the dairy cows are the lactating animals and the animals which have run dry’ and ‘the heifers are the animals which have been weaned but have not yet given birth’. The purpose of this definition is to avoid any confusion and facilitate checks by making clear which animals are being referred to when the terms ‘dairy herd’, ‘dairy cows’ and ‘heifers’ are used subsequently in the specification.

As the current specification contains no provisions on the origin of the dairy cows’ feed, a provision whereby ‘at least 80 % in dry matter of the dairy cows’ basic ration comes from the geographical area on average for all the dairy cows over the year’ has been added in order to strengthen the link with the geographical area. The threshold of 80 % has been set owing to the climatic characteristics of the geographical area of ‘Bleu des Causses’ (drying, easily prone to droughts).

The composition of the dairy cows’ basic ration has been added. It comprises ‘all fodder except cruciferous plants in the form of green fodder’. Cruciferous plants are forbidden because of their negative effect on the milk’s organoleptic characteristics (taste of cabbage).

It has also been added that ‘outside the grazing period the dairy cows are given at least 3 kg of hay, expressed as dry matter, per cow per day’. That provision has been complemented with the sentence ‘Hay means mowed and dried grass with a dry matter content of at least 80 %’. That definition is useful for the purpose of inspections.

A minimum grazing period of 120 days a year has been introduced for lactating dairy cows, supplemented by a provision for a minimum pasture area of 30 acres per cow on average for the grazing season. It has also been added that ‘the animals have access to the pastures’. These conditions aim at reinforcing the role of grazing in the feeding of the dairy cows and thereby strengthening the link with the geographical area.

More detailed rules on the feeding of the heifers and dry cows have been introduced, as follows: 'The heifers and dry cows are present on the holding at least a month before they start to lactate and are, from then on, given feed that complies with the provisions of the specification for lactating dairy cows' feed'. In other words, these animals are subject to an adjustment period of at least 1 month before their milk is used for the production of 'Bleu des Causses'.

A ban on the off-land rearing of dairy cows has been introduced to guarantee the link to the territory through the animals' feed.

A provision has been added to limit the amount of supplementary feed and additives to 1 800 kg of dry matter per dairy cow per year on average for all the dairy cows, so as to prevent this feed from becoming too dominant in the diet. Furthermore, a positive list has been drawn up of the raw materials authorised in the supplementary feed distributed to the dairy cows and of the authorised additives, as these lists are necessary to better manage, guarantee and monitor the feeding.

A provision banning GMOs in holdings' feed and crops has been added in order to maintain the feed's traditional character.

Milk used

The following provisions have been introduced: 'After milking, the milk is stored in refrigerated tanks' and 'Storage on the farm may not exceed 48 hours following the first milking'. These clarifications aim at limiting the deterioration of the milk.

It has been added that 'The unloading of vehicle tanks into stationary tanks must take place in the geographical area covered by the designation'. The provision is designed to guarantee the traceability of the milk collected and facilitate inspection.

Since the current specification does not contain a provision on the issue, it has been supplemented by adding the sentence 'the milk used for making "Bleu des Causses" may be raw or heat-treated'. Furthermore, the description of the product, 'Bleu des Causses is a cheese made exclusively from non-skimmed cow's milk', has been supplemented by adding that 'the cheese is made using unhomogenised whole milk that is non-standardised in terms of fat content and protein content'. That corresponds to the practices that have been in place for many years when processing milk used to produce 'Bleu des Causses'.

Manufacturing

A maximum period of 36 hours between the receipt of the milk at the processing plant and renneting has been introduced in order to prevent the deterioration of the raw material.

For the sake of precision, the renneting temperature has been raised slightly and set between 31 °C and 35 °C to replace the terms 'approximately 30 °C'. The renneting temperature greatly affects the activity of the rennet, and adjusting the temperature within the range '31 °C-35 °C', in accordance with the usual values, is an important parameter for managing production.

It has been specified that renneting must be carried out 'using rennet only', which replaces the sentences 'Coagulation is caused by rennet' and 'The renneting of the milk must be carried out using rennet only'. This is a formal amendment, and the reference to the traditional method of coagulating milk with rennet has been kept.

The words 'proven to be harmless in use' have been added after the words 'innocuous bacterial, yeast and mould cultures' in order to clarify the meaning.

The cutting and stirring of the curd after coagulation have been described in greater detail, in place of the sentence 'The curd is cut into cubes, then stirred and left to rest':

- The size of the curd grain after cutting, from 1 to 3 centimetres, has been added.
- The need to obtain a 'styled' curd grain has been introduced, this being important later when forming openings in the cheese: 'styled' curd grains remain separate during moulding.

- A reference has been added to a draining phase carried out in a vat and/or on a draining mat before placing in the mould. This step makes it possible to remove some of the whey prior to moulding without crushing the curd grains.

The sentence 'The curd-whey mixture is moulded and drained over a period of 2-4 days and turned several times a day' has been replaced by the following, more detailed, provisions:

- 'The curd-whey mixture is moulded. It may be stirred and mixed when being placed in the mould': the purpose of these operations is to resuspend the curd grains.
- 'Moulding begins not earlier than 1 hour 30 minutes and not later than 3 hours after renneting'. That provision sets out the limits beyond which the interval between renneting and moulding is no longer optimal for the production of 'Bleu des Causses'.
- 'This is followed by natural draining without pressing. The cheeses are turned regularly to reach the right degree of draining, and this is done in a room where the temperature ranges between 15 °C and 22 °C and over a period of 36 to 72 hours from the start of moulding'. These more precise provisions correspond to production practices. Setting values for the temperature and for the duration of draining is important so as to manage the acidification process of 'Bleu des Causses', which affects the selection of the cheese's flora.

The provision 'The temperature of the cheeses in moulds is then adjusted for salting over a period of 15 to 30 hours, in a room where the temperature ranges between 7 °C and 14 °C' has been added. During this temperature adjustment phase, the temperature of the cheeses is lowered gradually to prepare for the transition between draining and salting.

The sentence 'After removal from the mould, the cheese is salted with coarse salt' has been replaced with the paragraph 'After removal from the mould, salting using salt takes place in a room with a temperature between 7 °C and 14 °C. It is carried out either manually or mechanically by adding salt to the surface of the cheese in two steps: salting of one side and the heel, then salting of the other side and again of the heel. Brining is prohibited'. The salting method and temperature are thereby specified. Owing to its role in the selection of the flora, salting is indispensable for the development of *Penicillium roqueforti* in 'Bleu des Causses'. Furthermore, since both coarse salt and fine salt may be used without it making any particular difference to the product, the reference to the use of 'coarse' salt has been removed. The brining ban has been mentioned specifically.

The provisions 'Pricking takes place in cellars or at cheese dairies between the 5th and 12th day following renneting in order to make outlets for air in the cheese. The period between the pricking and the cheeses being placed in the cellar may not exceed 5 days' have been added and the phrase 'Once they have entered the cellar, the cheeses are pricked to form outlets for air in the cheese' has been removed. These amendments enable the following:

- On the one hand, to better determine the time for pricking, as it does not always take place when the cheese is being placed in the cellar: it may also be carried out at the cheese dairy.
- On the other hand, to determine the period between renneting and pricking in order to better describe the cheese-making process.
- Finally, to specify the maximum period between the pricking and the cheeses being placed in the cellar. As the pricking lets oxygen penetrate the paste, it is important that the cheeses be placed in the cellar within not more than 5 days so as to allow the development of *Penicillium roqueforti* in the best possible conditions.

Ripening and maturation

Since removing the surface salt before the cheeses are sent to the cellar is not always necessary, it has been added that this step is 'optional'.

The words 'natural ripening cellars located in the defined area' have been replaced by the words 'natural cellars in the limestone plateaux through which cool and humid air currents flow naturally from natural limestone fractures called "fleurines"' in order to provide a detailed description of the natural cellars by highlighting the specific ventilation system created by natural fractures called 'fleurines'. The reference to the location of the cellars in the defined area has been deleted, because the steps taking place in the geographical area have already been specified in the chapter 'Definition of the geographical area'.

The provision specifying that the cheeses are placed on racks has been removed, since the cheeses can be placed in various ways in the cellar without it affecting the product.

The sentence 'Then the cheeses undergo aerobic ripening for around 10 days at a temperature of 8 °C to 13 °C, depending on the season' has been replaced by the sentence 'In order to enable the good development of *Penicillium roqueforti*, the unpacked cheeses undergo an aerobic ripening in these natural cellars over a minimum period of 12 days from the date they are placed in the cellar':

- Thus it has been specified that the cheeses are not in a package while they are ripening in natural cellars, as this is important for the development of *Penicillium roqueforti*.
- The expression 'around ten days', which is not sufficiently precise, has been replaced by the definition of a minimum duration of 12 days from the date of entering the cellar. This duration corresponds to the practice in the cellar during the warm season (during the cold season, the ripening period in the natural cellar is longer).
- The provision specifying that the temperature of the natural cellar is set between 8 °C and 13 °C has been deleted. This temperature cannot be standardised, because it depends on the natural ventilation guaranteed by the 'fleurines', which varies according to the external climatic conditions.

The sentence 'After this, the "skin" of the cheese is cleaned and the cheeses are packed in a special packaging before being placed in a cold room for anaerobic refining' has been replaced by the sentences 'After this, the cheeses are packed in individual, neutral and temporary packaging ("sealed") before being placed in a refrigerated room for anaerobic maturation. The temperature of that room may not be below – 4 °C or above + 4 °C':

- since it is not always necessary to clean the skin of the cheese prior to packaging, as this has no effect on the characteristics of the cheese, the provision 'the "skin" of the cheese is cleaned' has been deleted,
- the concept of 'special packaging' has been replaced by a more precise description of the packaging, which is individual, neutral (meaning without any markings except those necessary for traceability) and temporary, this packaging operation being called 'sealing',
- the phase of 'ripening in a cold room' is now designated using the more precise technical terms of 'maturation in a refrigerated room', which is anaerobic,
- the temperature range for that maturation phase has been specified (– 4 °C to + 4 °C) in order to better manage the production conditions of 'Bleu des Causses'.

It has been added that 'the cheeses may not leave the maturation room before the 70th day or after the 190th day following the renneting date'. This phrase replaces the phrase 'The total ripening period varies according to the cheesemakers and ripeners. It is from 70 to 130 days', which was less precise. The maximum total ripening period of 130 days has been deleted. It has been replaced by defining a maximum period of 190 days in a refrigerated room, calculated from the renneting date, as this guarantees the organoleptic characteristics of the product.

The ban on conserving fresh cheeses and cheeses undergoing ripening under a modified atmosphere has been extended to cover cheeses undergoing maturation, since conservation under a modified atmosphere is incompatible with the maturation process.

The sentences 'On leaving the cellar, the cheeses are placed in a "resting room" for 4 to 6 days. Their surface is then cleaned, and they are classified using criteria for weight, shape and size, and quality' have been deleted. Depending on the needs of the cheese dairy, it could happen that the steps of placing the cheese in a resting room (in which the cheeses are stored while awaiting packaging after leaving the maturation room), cleaning the surface of the cheese and classifying the cheeses using criteria for weight, format and quality are not always carried out, without this affecting the specificity of the product.

Heading 'Labelling'

The requirement to include the 'INAO' logo on labels has been deleted and replaced by a requirement to include the European Union PDO logo.

In order to clarify the terms that may be next to the name of the designation, the following sentence has been added: 'Irrespective of the regulatory references applicable to all cheeses, the use of any other adjective directly next to the name of the designation is prohibited in labelling, advertising, invoices and commercial documents, with the exception of specific brand names or trademarks and the words "ripened in a natural cellar"'. This has been done, in particular, to allow the possibility of referring to ripening in natural cellars, which is one of the specificities of 'Bleu des Causses'.

Other

Under the subheading 'Product inspection', it has been added that the analytical and organoleptic testing of the product 'is carried out by random sampling on cheeses aged at least 70 days as calculated from the renneting date, using procedures provided for in the inspection plan'. This information is used in the inspection plan for the designation of origin drawn up by the inspection body.

The heading 'Details bearing out the link with the geographical area' has been reworded and divided into three parts in order to better highlight the different elements making up the link with the geographical area. Consequently the part 'specificity of the geographical area' includes the natural factors by referring, in particular, to the erosion of the limestone plateaux that forms the cellars and 'fleurines' as well as the human factors by summarising the historical aspects and underlining the specific know-how of the producers of 'Bleu des Causses' (e.g. adapting cattle rearing to the territory, producing whole milk, stirring the curd grains in a production vat, draining without pressing, pricking, ripening in a natural cellar, anaerobic maturing). The part 'specificity of the product' has been updated with the elements introduced in the description of the product. Finally, the point 'causal link' explains the interactions between the natural and human factors and the product.

In order to update the heading 'References to the inspection body', the name and contact details of the official bodies have been modified.

Finally, a table has been added which sets out the main points to be checked and the relevant evaluation method to be used, in accordance with the national legislation in force.

SINGLE DOCUMENT

'BLEU DES CAUSSES'

EU No: PDO-FR-0108-AM02 — 31.3.2017

PDO (X) PGI ()

1. Name(s)

'Bleu des Causses'

2. Member State or Third Country

France

3. Description of the agricultural product or foodstuff

3.1. Type of product

Class 1.3. Cheeses

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

'Bleu des Causses' is an unpressed, uncooked, fermented and salted blue-veined cheese made exclusively from renneted, non-skimmed cow's milk. It has a minimum fat content of 50 grams per 100 grams of cheese after total desiccation and its dry matter content must not be less than 53 grams for 100 grams of cheese.

The cheese comes in the form of a flat cylinder that is regular in shape, 19-21 centimetres in diameter, 8-12 centimetres high and weighing 2,2 to 3,3 kilograms.

The surface of the cheese is clean, without excessive smears or spots.

The paste is ivory-white, uniform in colour, smooth, fine, with evenly distributed blue-green marbling and possible needlehole traces. It has a smooth and tender texture.

The taste is clean, flavoursome, with aromas characteristic of blue cheese; it may have a slight bitterness without excessive pungency or too much salt.

The designation of origin 'Bleu des Causses' may not be used until the 70th day after renneting.

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

At least 80 % in dry matter of the dairy cows' basic ration comes from the geographical area on average for all the dairy cows over the year.

The dairy cows' basic ration is composed of all fodder except cruciferous plants in the form of green fodder.

Outside the grazing period the dairy cows are given at least 3 kilograms of hay, expressed as dry matter, per cow per day. Hay means mowed and dried grass with a dry matter content of at least 80 %.

When grass is available, grazing is mandatory for the lactating dairy cows as soon as the weather allows. In any case, the grazing period may not be less than 120 days a year.

The use of supplementary feed and additives is limited to a maximum of 1 800 kg of dry matter per dairy cow per year on average for all the dairy cows.

It is clear from the provisions above that at least 56 % of the dry matter in the total feed ration per year provided to the dairy cows is produced in the geographical area. All of the feed, in particular the supplementary feed, does not necessarily come from the geographical area, because there is little land suitable for crops, and the climatic conditions, with hills that receive much rain and dry limestone plateaux, limit their production.

Only the raw materials and additives specified in a positive list are authorised in the supplementary feed and additives given to the dairy cows.

Only plants, by-products and supplementary feed derived from non-transgenic products are authorised in the animal feed. The planting of transgenic crops is prohibited in all areas of farms producing milk for the production of the 'Bleu des Causses' designation of origin. This prohibition applies to all types of plant likely to be given as feed to animals on the farm and to all crops liable to contaminate such plants.

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

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

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

The cutting of 'Bleu des Causses' is authorised if it does not alter the cheese's texture. 'Bleu des Causses' may be presented in pieces that have been cut mechanically.

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

The labelling for each cheese contains the name of the designation of origin 'Bleu des Causses' in characters at least two-thirds the size of the largest characters on the label.

Irrespective of the regulatory references applicable to all cheeses, the use of any other adjective directly next to the name of the designation is prohibited in labelling, advertising, invoices and commercial documents, with the exception of specific brand names or trademarks and the words 'ripened in a natural cellar'.

4. Concise definition of the geographical area

The geographical area of 'Bleu des Causses' forms a mosaic of terrains issued from magmatic, metamorphic or calcareous rocks. Limestone plateaux are characteristic features of this landscape. They are particular in that they occasionally provide natural cellars having fractures that naturally regulate the humidity and ventilation of the cellar. These cavities are particularly suited to the ripening of 'Bleu des Causses', which has been carried out in the area for a long time.

The geographical area of the designation of origin 'Bleu des Causses' covers practically all of the department of Aveyron and part of the departments of Lot, Lozère, Gard and Hérault. It stretches over the following territory:

Department of Aveyron

The cantons of Aveyron and Tarn, Causse-Comtal, Causses-Rougiers, Ceor-Ségala, Enne and Alzou, Lot and Dourdou, Lot and Montbazinois, Lot and Palanges, Lot and Truyère, Millau-1, Millau-2, Monts du Réquistanais, Nord-Lézérou, Raspes and Lévezou, Rodez-1, Rodez-2, Rodez-Onet, Saint-Affrique, Tarn and Causses, Vallon, Villefranche-de-Rouergue, Villeneuvevois and Villefranchois.

The municipalities of Campouriez, Cassuéjous, Condom-d'Aubrac, Curières, Florentin-la-Capelle, Huparlac, Laguiole, Montézic, Montpeyroux, Saint-Amans-des-Cots, Saint-Chély-d'Aubrac, Saint-Symphorien-de-Thénières, Soulages-Bonneval.

Department of Gard

The municipality of Trèves.

Department of Hérault

The municipality of Pégairolles-de-l'Escalette.

Department of Lot

The cantons of Cahors-1, Cahors-2, Cahors-3, Causse and Vallées, Luzech, Marches du Sud-Quercy.

The municipalities of Boissières, Le Boulvé, Boussac, Calamane, Calès, Cambes, Cassagnes, Catus, Cœur-de-Causse, Corn, Crayssac, Duravel, Durbans, Espère, Flaujac-Gare, Floressas, Francoulès, Gignac, Gigouzac, Ginouillac, Grézels, Les Junies, Labastide-du-Vert, Lacapelle-Cabanac, Lachapelle-Auzac, Lagardelle, Lamothe-Cassel, Lamothe-Fénelon, Lanzac, Lherm, Livernon, Loupiac, Mauroux, Maxou, Mechmont, Montamel, Montcabrier, Montfaucon, Montgesty, Nadaillac-de-Rouge, Nuzéjous, Payrac, Pescadoires, Pontcirq, Prayssac, Puy-l'Évêque, Reilhac, Reilhaguet, Le Roc, Saint-Chamarand, Saint-Cirq-Souillaguet, Saint-Denis-Catus, Saint-Martin-le-Redon, Saint-Matré, Saint-Médard, Saint-Pierre-Lafeuille, Saint-Projet, Saux, Séniergues, Sérignac, Soturac, Soucirac, Souillac, Touzac, Ussel, Uzech, Le Vigan, Vire-sur-Lot.

Department of Lozère

The cantons of La Canourgue, Chirac, Saint-Chély-d'Apcher.

The following municipalities in their entirety: Allenc, Antrenas, Aumont-Aubrac, Badaroux, Les Bessons, Brenoux, Le Buisson, Chadenet, Chaulhac, La Chaze-de-Peyre, La Fage-Saint-Julien, Fau-de-Peyre, Fraissinet-de-Fourques, Gatuzières, Hures-la-Parade, Ispagnac, Javols, Julianges, Lanuéjols, Le Malzieu-Forain, Le Malzieu-Ville, Marvejols, Mas-Saint-Chély, Mende, Meyrueis, Montbrun, Les Monts-Verts, Paulhac-en-Margeride, Quézac, Recoules-de-Fumas, Le Rozier, Saint-Bauzile, Saint-Étienne-du-Valdonnez, Saint-Laurent-de-Muret, Saint-Léger-de-Peyre, Saint-Léger-du-Malzieu, Saint-Pierre-de-Nogaret, Saint-Pierre-des-Tripiers, Saint-Privat-du-Fau, Saint-Sauveur-de-Peyre, Sainte-Colombe-de-Peyre, Sainte-Hélène, Vebron.

The following municipalities in part: Cans-et-Cévennes (for the territory of the delegated municipality of Saint-Laurent-de-Trèves), Florac-Trois-Rivières (for the territory of the delegated municipality of Florac).

5. Link with the geographical area

The geographical area of the designation of origin 'Bleu des Causses' is located at the south-east end of the Massif Central. It is delimited by mountain ranges in the north, east and south of the area: the Monts d'Aubrac in the north, the Margeride and Cévennes in the east and the Monts de Lacaune in the south. The western boundary consists of the eastern end of the Aquitaine Basin. Most of the geographical area is mid-mountainous and becomes flatter towards the west as it reaches the Aquitaine Basin. Therefore it presents rather diverse landscapes characterised notably by a succession of rocky, upland limestone plateaux called 'Causses'.

The erosion, which is principally hydraulic, causes karstic cavities to form. A number of 'fleurines' — fractures that let through cold and humid air currents — can be found in these large caverns in the calcareous subsoil of the Causses. The outside air penetrating the subsoil through the numerous surface fractures picks up moisture and cools on contact with the damp walls of the rocks or the ground waters; it becomes denser and has a natural tendency to escape through the lower openings, in other words the 'fleurines' of the cellars. The drier and warmer the outside air, the more active this movement and the lower the cellar's temperature.

The climate results mainly from oceanic and Mediterranean influences. The influence of the mountainous climate of the Massif Central is also felt along the northern edge of the geographical area and on the peaks. The occasionally varied topography and the exposure to winds create contrasts between the hills, subject to higher rainfall, and the drier limestone plateaux. All of the geographical area enjoys plentiful sunshine generally exceeding 2 000 hours a year. The dairy farms are located in generally low and dry parts of the area that have calcareous terrains but also, to a large extent, basement terrains or marly-limestone and sandstone terrains, where it is possible to grow grass and maize.

'Bleu des Causses' has always been made in the region of limestone plateaux extending over the department of Aveyron and the neighbouring departments. The production of 'Bleu des Causses' developed in particular after the adoption of the Law of 26 July 1925, which prohibited the production and ripening of cheeses that were not made from sheep's milk (but from cow's milk, for instance) in the municipality of Roquefort. This encouraged the creation of a sector for blue cheese made from cow's milk in the geographical area. First called 'Bleu de l'Aveyron', this cheese was defined by decree in 1945. It was recognised as a controlled designation of origin called 'Bleu des Causses' by decree on 21 May 1979.

In a region where sheep predominate, cattle rearing was maintained by relying on fodder crops that are adapted to the terrains and climate of the geographical area and constitute 80 % of the dairy cows' basic ration.

Nowadays the making of 'Bleu des Causses' calls for specific know-how. The milk is used whole, without homogenisation. After being cut, the curd grains are stirred in a production vat in order to style them, in other words cover them with a thin film that prevents the grains from sticking together during moulding. Once it is in the mould, the cheese is drained naturally, without pressing, as this keeps the grains separate from one another. The pricking of the cheese with a bundle of needles before refining it in a natural cellar forms outlets for air in the cheese, which let oxygen penetrate the paste.

The cheese is then made to ripen in a humid natural cellar ventilated through natural 'fleurines', and this enables the development of *Penicillium roqueforti*. Once this mould has grown well, the cheese is 'sealed', meaning that it is wrapped in individual packaging for the anaerobic maturation phase.

'Bleu des Causses' is a whole cow's milk cheese with an ivory-white paste that is uniform in colour and has evenly distributed blue-green marbling. It has a smooth and tender texture.

The taste is clean, flavoursome, with aromas characteristic of blue cheese; it may have a slight bitterness without excessive pungency or too much salt.

The recognition of 'Bleu des Causses', a blue cheese made from cow's milk, is based on the organisation of a group of people who wanted to enhance the value of cow's milk production in a region dominated by sheep production, in response to the strict rules regulating the production of Roquefort, a blue cheese made from sheep's milk.

The production of 'Bleu des Causses' is based on know-how acquired in the geographical area resulting in a cheese that has an ivory-white paste with an evenly distributed marbling. Using unhomogenised whole milk contributes to the colour of the paste. The styling of the curd grains in a vat, the natural draining without pressing and the pricking create regular openings in the paste of the cheese in which *Penicillium roqueforti* develops during ripening. This makes it possible to obtain an evenly distributed marbling.

The ripening of 'Bleu des Causses' is closely linked to the geographical area, which consists of limestone plateaux where there are cellars with natural 'fleurines' linked to the geological formation of the soil. The 'fleurines' — fractures that have formed naturally over time in the typical calcareous soil of the Causses — let in air currents, which then settle between the surface of the plateaux and the cellars in the subsoil, bringing freshness and humidity. Those air currents help create a favourable environment for the development of *Penicillium roqueforti* inside the cheese. That mould is behind the blue-green marbling of 'Bleu des Causses'.

The anaerobic maturation following the ripening in a natural cellar slows down the development of *Penicillium roqueforti* while allowing the enzymatic action to continue (proteolysis and lipolysis). It is during that phase that the cheese acquires its smooth and tender texture and characteristic aromas of blue cheese and its bitterness is replaced by a clean and flavoursome taste.

In other words, the action of the *Penicillium roqueforti* mould during the ripening in a natural cellar and maturation contribute greatly to the principal organoleptic characteristics of 'Bleu des Causses'.

Reference to publication of the specification

(the second subparagraph of Article 6(1) of this Regulation)

https://info.agriculture.gouv.fr/gedei/site/bo-agri/document_administratif-4a26bad1-2827-4edb-b58e-b06c876f6781/telechargement
