

COMMISSION IMPLEMENTING DECISION**of 6 December 2018****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****(‘Paška sol’ (PDO))**

(2018/C 449/05)

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 of 21 November 2012 on quality schemes for agricultural products and foodstuffs ⁽¹⁾, and in particular Article 50(2)(a) thereof,

Whereas:

- (1) Croatia has sent to the Commission an application for protection of the name ‘Paška sol’ in accordance with Article 49(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012.
- (2) In accordance with Article 50 of Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012 the Commission has examined that application and concluded that it fulfils the conditions laid down in that Regulation.
- (3) 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 ‘Paška sol’ 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 ‘Paška sol’ (PDO) are contained in the Annex to this Decision.

In accordance with Article 51 of Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012, the publication of this Decision shall confer the right to oppose to the registration of the name referred to in the first paragraph of this Article within three months from the date of publication of this Decision in the *Official Journal of the European Union*.

Done at Brussels, 6 December 2018.

For the Commission

Phil HOGAN

Member of the Commission

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 343, 14.12.2012, p. 1.

ANNEX

SINGLE DOCUMENT

'PAŠKA SOL'

EU No: PDO-HR-02178 — 15.9.2016

PDO (X) PGI ()

1. Name(s)

'Paška sol'

2. Member State or Third Country

Croatia

3. Description of the agricultural product or foodstuff

3.1. Type of product

Class 1.8. Other products listed in Annex I to the Treaty (spices etc.)

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

Protection of the name 'Paška sol' covers two products: fine sea salt and flower of salt.

The fine sea salt 'Paška sol' is non-ground sea salt obtained from the sea water of the Pag Bay which continuously pours into an evaporation pool system until it crystallises in the Pag island salt pans. It takes the form of small, regular, cube-shaped crystals which are white in colour and contain minerals and trace elements. Most of the crystals are up to 1 mm in size, so that > 98 % of all crystals can pass through a sieve with a mesh size of 1,3 mm. It has a concentrated, salty, bitter-free taste.

Composition:

Proportion of sodium chloride in total dry matter (%)	> 98,0
Water content (%)	< 0,40
Magnesium (%)	0,02-0,20
Calcium (%)	0,01-0,10
Potassium (%)	> 0,02
Arsenic (mg/kg)	< 0,25
Cadmium (mg/kg)	< 0,25
Lead (mg/kg)	< 0,20
Mercury (mg/kg)	< 0,10
Granulation	The residue on a sieve with a diameter of 1,3 mm is < 2 %,

The flower of salt 'Paška sol' is a product of the initial phase of manufacture of fine sea salt, i.e. during the production of concentrated sea water. It has a slightly sweetish taste. Its texture is crunchy and very brittle. It is white to pale yellow in colour owing to high levels of minerals. It has a distinctive flavour, is less salty than cooking salt and contains more natural minerals (magnesium, calcium, potassium, iodine). The granulation of the flower of salt 'Paška sol' is coarser than that of the fine sea salt 'Paška sol'; its crystals have the shape of shells and crumble easily when rubbed between the fingertips.

Composition:

Proportion of sodium chloride in total dry matter (%)	> 97,0
Water content (%)	< 2,00
Magnesium (%)	> 0,07
Calcium (%)	0,02-0,20
Potassium (%)	> 0,05
Arsenic (mg/kg)	< 0,25
Cadmium (mg/kg)	< 0,25
Lead (mg/kg)	< 0,30
Mercury (mg/kg)	< 0,10

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

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

All processes in the production of 'Paška sol', from the use of the pool to salt processing (production of saturated sea water, crystallisation, drying and sieving), must take place within the defined 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

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4. Concise definition of the geographical area

'Paška sol' is produced in the salt pans of Pag in the Pag Bay, surrounded from all sides with the land of the Pag island. Pag Bay is connected to the waters of the Velebit Channel by Pag Strait. The Pag salt pans are 3 km from the town of Pag and lie within the administrative boundaries of Zadar County.

5. Link with the geographical area*Specificity of the geographical area*

The specific characteristics of 'Paška sol' result from the climatic conditions of the defined geographical area and the fact that the Pag salt pans are in an isolated location, far from any heavy industry or agricultural activity.

The entire area of the island of Pag is distinctive, primarily because it is an island, and the salt pans are located in the particularly distinctive setting of Pag Bay, surrounded from all sides by the land mass of the island. In addition, transportation of the salt produced out of there is quite easy, as Pag is connected to the mainland by a bridge.

The defined geographical area enjoys a predominantly mild Mediterranean climate with low precipitation and over 2 500 hours of sunshine a year. The mild Mediterranean climate brings dry and hot summers and mild and wet winters.

The ideal geographical location of the Pag island and its salt pans near the mountain Velebit is conditioned by a continuous and rapid exchange of air resulting from the natural flow of the Maestral (a north-westerly wind that blows by day), and the Burin (a north-easterly wind that blows in the early evening and at night). The Maestral is a fresh wind accompanied by stable weather which tempers the sweltering summer heat, whereas the Burin is a weak night wind which blows from the land towards the sea.

The whole vast area on which the Pag salt pans are located and the large shallow cove of Pag Bay which surrounds the salt pans are covered by thick impermeable loam, particularly favourable for the production of 'Paška sol'.

The distinctiveness of 'Paška sol' also comes from human factors. The special techniques and know-how of the 'vodari' (as they are referred to by Pag locals) with regard to maintaining salt pools and obtaining brine has been passed on from generation to generation. Through many years of experience, the 'vodari' know how to determine the best moment for harvesting the flower of salt without disturbing the balance on the surface of the saturated sea water or brine, and avoid making waves which tear the crystallised 'crust' on the surface of the pool, or the crystals of the flower of salt. In this way the flower of salt is prevented from falling to the bottom and being wasted.

Specificity of the product

'Paška sol' fine sea salt crystallises under controlled conditions in vacuum evaporators and does not undergo a process of grinding; rather, its specific properties result from its production method which helps the salt preserve all minerals and trace elements present in high-quality sea water. 'Paška sol' fine sea salt is completely white, with crystals of a regular cube shape and a granulation of 1,3 mm. It does not undergo a process of grinding, unlike sea salt obtained in the traditional way (crystallisation in pools), which has to be ground, is of uneven granulation, contains various impurities and is yellowish in colour.

'Paška sol' flower of salt consists of very small crystals which are natural white to pale yellow in colour owing to natural crystallisation on the surface of the sea in salt ponds under ideal conditions (very sunny and warm weather with no wind and no precipitation). Only the thin upper layer of flaky crystals is harvested or gathered with a traditional hand tool — a net comprising a wooden handle attached to a shovel blade frame covered with a stainless metal mesh with very fine holes. The flower of salt is harvested only over the course of a few hours early in the morning and late in the evening; afterwards, it is dried in the sun. The flower of salt 'Paška sol' is very brittle compared to the fine sea salt 'Paška sol'; it crumbles easily when rubbed between the fingers and has a coarser granulation. It contains higher levels of natural iodine, calcium, magnesium and potassium.

Compared with other sea salts that have been researched, the proportion of heavy metals in 'Paška sol' is a hundred times lower than permitted, whereas the proportion of minerals is higher than in other salts produced in vacuum evaporators (scientific study, Centre for Marine Research (CMR) of the Ruđer Bošković Institute, 2011, 'The quality of sea water in Pag Bay').

The first written records of 'Paška sol' production date far back in history. The authors Koludrović and Franić state that 'Paška sol' was mentioned as early as in the 9th century: 'Essential for feeding humans and livestock, the salt began to be traded very early on, with the oldest notarial documents providing details of the buying and selling of "Paška sol"'. (Koludrović A., Franić M., *Sol i morske solane* (Salt and salt pans), 1954, Zagreb). Usmiani, the author of the book 'The Pag salt pans — production and trade from 1797 to 1813', wrote: 'Venice has always consumed "Paška sol", since it was white and pure, and great importance was attached to it in the overall trading and financial potential of the region, especially of Pag itself' (Usmiani A., *Paška solana — proizvodnja i trgovina od 1797. do 1813. godine*, 1984). The name 'Paška sol' has always been used, as evidenced by a variety of historical documents, and is still used in commercial and everyday language (*Račun Solane Pag*).

Causal link between the product and the geographical area

The elements creating the microclimate of the geographical region of Pag island, the favourable location of the salt pans, the specific method of producing the fine sea salt and flower of salt and several hundred years of tradition of producing salt affect the specific quality of the final product, 'Paška sol'.

The salt pans or pools lie in the naturally shallow bay of Pag island, where currents are weak. The bottom of the bay is covered with impermeable loam, so, together with permanent winds (the Maestral and the Burin) blowing in the spring and summer months, conditions are favourable for the rapid evaporation of sea water in the pools and for salt panning.

The sea water of Pag Bay is exceptionally pure and well-filtered, as the bottom of Pag Bay is rich in shellfish, which are natural purifiers. Therefore, the sea water has very low values of heavy-metal, well below the Mediterranean Sea average, and much lower than the concentrations used to determine quality standards for the marine environment (scientific study, Centre for Marine Research (CMR) of the Ruđer Bošković Institute, 2011, *Kvaliteta mora u Paškom zaljevu* ('The quality of sea water in Pag Bay')).

The specificity of the method of producing 'Paška sol' lies in the fact that saturated sea water, before undergoing a controlled process of crystallisation in vacuum evaporators, rests for a while in accumulation pools. As a result, the saturated sea water does not have any impurities of organic and inorganic origin formed by marine microorganisms or transported by the wind and the birds which would subsequently be deposited on the bottom of the pool. The consequence of this specific method of production is that the controlled crystallisation of salt results in pure crystals, free of all foreign matter of either organic or inorganic origin; they have a regular cube-shaped structure (the crystals do not break), are white, and have a concentrated, salty, bitterless taste.

The specific quality of 'Paška sol' is further supported by the fact that the sea water of Pag Bay, from which 'Paška sol' is produced, and its marine environment, is of a high quality due to very low values of heavy-metal; scientific research has been conducted on this basis. The Institute for Oceanography and Fisheries discovered through research that values for heavy metals in the sea water of Pag Bay are significantly lower than the average values for heavy metals in the Mediterranean Sea. Consequently, 'Paška sol' also has considerably lower levels of heavy metals and higher levels of minerals than other types of salt (scientific study, Institute for Oceanography and Fisheries Split, 2009, *Kakvoća morske vode u Paškom zaljevu* (The quality of sea water in Pag Bay)).

In addition, human actors also ensure the high quality of the final product, as the tradition of producing 'Paška sol' fine sea salt and flower of salt is based on skills and many years of experience in maintaining the salt pools and obtaining brine for the final 'Paška sol' product.

Reference to publication of the product specification

(Article 6(1), subparagraph 2 of the present Regulation)

<http://www.mps.hr/datastore/filestore/82/Izmijenjena-Specifikacija-proizvoda-Paska-sol.pdf>
