

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

(2015/C 327/11)

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⁾.

SINGLE DOCUMENT

'ABRICOTS ROUGES DU ROUSSILLON'**EU No: FR-PDO-0005-01328 – 15.4.2015****PDO (X) PGI ()****1. Name(s)**

'Abricots rouges du Roussillon'

2. Member State or Third Country

France

3. Description of the agricultural product or foodstuff**3.1. Type of product**

Class 1.6. Fruit, vegetables and cereals fresh or processed

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

The 'Abricots rouges du Roussillon' are fresh apricots of the following varieties:

— Rouge du Roussillon (population and A157);

— Aviéra;

— Royal Roussillon;

— Avikandi.

The fruit are characterised by their overall apricot colour, with some vivid red speckling, and their small or medium size with a diameter measuring between 35 and 55 millimetres. They have a sweet taste and a sugar content of over than 12 degrees Brix. They are soft in texture, juicy and melt in the mouth. They are low in acidity and smell strongly of fresh fruit (peach/nectarine) and apricot juice.

The apricots are harvested when ripe, which is gauged on two criteria: skin colour and suture colour.

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 defined geographical area

The entire production process takes place within the defined geographical area.

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 343, 14.12.2012, p. 1.

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

The apricots are packed in the production area.

They are packed in deep containers with rigid sides weighing a maximum of 5 kilograms for the fresh market and a maximum of 25 kilograms for apricots intended for processing.

The fruit must be packed in the area to best preserve its qualities, taking into account:

- that the fruit must be harvested when ripe, by hand and in containers that protect the fruit;
- the specific characteristics of ‘Abricots rouges du Roussillon’ which vary in texture from slightly firm to soft, and are juicy and melt in the mouth.

Growers therefore take every precaution to best preserve the fruit’s wholeness and qualities:

- the apricots are rapidly brought to the packing facility (within a maximum of 12 hours from when the fruit was harvested);
- the time period between harvesting and dispatching is limited to a maximum of 6 days;
- the fruit is packed in rigid containers in order to protect it from any impact;
- regulated storage conditions prior to dispatch (refrigerated storage at or below 10 °C).

In addition, sorting and packing are carried out by the growers themselves, all located within the geographical area. They have the necessary experience and a good knowledge of how to handle this perishable product.

Together, these provisions ensure that the fruit is handled as little as possible and contribute to preserving the product’s characteristics which therefore justifies the requirement to pack the apricots within the geographic area.

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

In addition to the compulsory information provided for by legislation on labelling and the presentation of food-stuffs, each pack contains the following information:

- the name of the designation of origin ‘Abricots rouges du Roussillon’
- the variety name,
- the European Union’s PDO logo.

This information must be indicated in conspicuous, clearly legible and indelible characters of a sufficient size that stand out from the label on which they are printed so as to be clearly distinguishable from all other written or graphic information.

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

The defined geographic area of the designation of origin ‘Abricots rouges du Roussillon’ is made up of the following municipalities located in the department of Pyrénées-Orientales:

- all the municipalities in the cantons of Argelès-sur-Mer, Canet-en-Roussillon, Côte-Radiouse, Elne, Millas, Perpignan, Saint-Estève, Saint-Laurent-de-la-Salanque and Toulouges;
- the municipalities of Clara, Catllar, Codalet, Eus, Los Masos, Prades, Ria Sirach, Estagel, Latour-de-France, Montner and Tautavel;
- the municipalities in the following cantons:
 - Ceret, except for the municipalities of Albère, Calmeilles, Les Cluses, Oms, Le Perthus and Taillet;
 - Rivesaltes except for the municipalities of Opoul-Périllos and Vingrau;
 - Thuir except for the municipality of Caixas;
 - Vinça except for the municipalities of Baillestavy, Boule-d’Amont, Casefabre, Glorianes, Montalba-le-Château, Prunet et Belpuig and Valmanya.

5. Link with the geographical area

Natural factors

The geographical area is located in the department of Pyrénées-Orientales, the southernmost region of mainland France.

This part of France resembles the arena of a vast amphitheatre facing east towards the Mediterranean sea and drawn up by the Corbières to the North, the foothills of the Canigou Massif to the west and the Albera Massif to the south.

Three rivers cut across the area from east to west — the Têt, the Tech and the Agly — which over time have shaped the landscape into terraces and hills.

The Têt, the main river, is flanked by:

- a large area of terraces with stony and impoverished soil on the left bank, to the north around Rivesaltes;
- the region of Les Aspres on the right bank, to the south and as far as the Pre-Pyrenees, where the soils are mainly made up of detrital molasse from the Pliocène period, more or less largely covered by ancient alluvial deposits from the Quaternary period, and where only a few high terraces remain.

Modern alluvial soils from the Quaternary period can also be found on the lower part of the Roussillon plain and along the three rivers.

The altitude of the plain varies from 0 to 200 metres. However, on the foothills of the amphitheatre, apricot orchards can reach up to 450 metres in altitude.

The Roussillon climate is strongly affected by its proximity to the sea in the east and by the mountains surrounding the entire geographic area. It is a Mediterranean climate in the strictest sense of the term: very hot and dry in the summer, with two to three months of summer droughts and average temperatures of approximately 24 °C in July and August. The winters are mild with less than two weeks of freezing a year and an average temperature of 8 °C in the coldest month, but with a few hours when the temperature drops below 7,2 °C (700 to 1 000 hours) which is sufficient for breaking dormancy. There is a considerable amount of sunshine with more than 2 500 hours per year.

Rainfall during storms is low (approximately 600 millimetres on average) and greatly varies from one year to the next.

However, a characteristic of this region's climate is the presence of almost constant winds:

- the 'Tramontane', a north-west wind, blows one day out of three, and is dry and often strong;
- the 'Marin', which is hot and humid.

Human factors

The geographic area is the historic birthplace of apricot cultivation in the region. Apricot trees cover a perimeter of the low and medium valleys, fluvial formations and the lower hills and valleys where the natural supply of water is sufficient or supplemented by a traditional system of canals mainly dating back to the Middle Ages.

Apricot trees were introduced by the Arabs and have existed in the geographic area for more than 10 centuries. The development of their cultivation in the Pyrénées-Orientales for commercial purposes dates from the beginning of the 19th century. The development of their production was subsequently boosted by the advent of rail transport. In 1937, the Roussillon harvest accounted for 60 % of French production (*L'économie agricole des Pyrénées Orientales* [The agricultural economy of the Pyrénées-Orientales] - Louis Rives, 1942). In 1971, the department of Pyrénées-Orientales was the first French department to grow apricots, with 72 % of its cultivated land used for the Rouge du Roussillon population variety (*Atlas agricole — DDA 66* [Agricultural atlas — Departmental Directorate for Agriculture 66], December 1972).

For over a century, apricot cultivation in Roussillon has remained faithful to the 'Rouge du Roussillon' varietal type, characterised by the red speckling on the apricot coloured skin. Over time and as a result of environmental factors (climate, soil) and farming practices (grafting), this variety, which is 'perfectly suited to the Roussillon climate' (*L'abricotier* [The apricot tree] - Norbert Got, 1938), has established itself as a 'population variety'.

Subsequently, in the mid 20th century, a selection programme was launched with the main aim of limiting the phenomenon of biennial bearing. This led to the selection of clone A 157. Genetic improvement was carried out and led to the selection of the varieties Aviera (1988), Avikandi (1991) and Royal Roussillon (1996), as they met the characteristics of the 'Abricots rouges du Roussillon' (see the work of CTIFL 1995-1996 — Inter-branch technical centre for fruit and vegetables and the Agro-Emergence laboratory 2000 to 2002 and 2010).

These varieties have remained local to this area and, outside the department of Pyrénées-Orientales, only one hectare planted with Rouge du Roussillon apricot trees, 1,5 hectares with Aviera trees, less than one hectare with Royal Roussillon trees and no plantations with Avikandi trees have been identified (2010 census). In fact, attempts to plant these trees outside the geographical area have all failed, and no commercial production of the Rouge du Roussillon variety can be found in other production areas, whether French or foreign.

In 2012, 41 % of the land for Roussillon apricot trees was used for these varieties with a production of 6 000 tonnes, i.e. 38 % of production (2012 data, Chamber of Agriculture 66).

These apricots are popular on the fresh market due to their taste and fragrance, and are also extremely sought after by manufacturers (on average 20 % of production) for processing (dairy products, biscuits, jam and fruit juice etc.). Major brands such as Danone (with Gervita and Lu), Yoplait, Andros and distributor brands (Reflets de France, Nos Régions ont du Talent) use these apricots in their preparations.

These varieties, which could be described as 'endemic' to Roussillon, have endured thanks to the expertise of the fruit growers which is especially evident in:

- the orchards planted in alluvial and colluvial soils up to 450 metres in altitude;
- the open-centre pruning of the multi-scaffold branches of these trees;
- the preservation of agricultural land divisions into small parcels, sheltered between windbreaks;
- the implementation of networks or the use of a traditional network of canals for irrigation when necessary.

This expertise is also reflected in:

- traditional harvesting carried out exclusively by hand;
- rapid transportation in under 12 hours to the packing facilities;
- packing practices that are adapted to the specific characteristics of fruit of this designation which vary in texture from slightly firm to soft, namely in deep containers with rigid sides;
- storage practices that preserve the wholeness of the fruit and prevent bruising (refrigerated storage at or below 10 °C).

Specificity of the product

The 'Abricots rouges du Roussillon' are distinguished by:

- an apricot coloured skin with (characteristic) vivid red speckles. They are distinct from 'two-tone' apricots where the orange and red colours are mixed together, with no distinct colour boundaries;
- a small to average size, with a diameter of 35 to 55 millimetres.

They have a soft texture and sweet taste. Their sugar level is over 12° Brix. They are juicy, melt in the mouth, quite soft and with low acidity which gives an impression of sweetness, and smell strongly of fresh fruit (peach/nectarine) and apricot juice.

Causal link

The 'Abricots rouges du Roussillon' have a strong link with the geographic area.

Their characteristics are the result of the interaction between the apricot tree's agronomic and climatic requirements (which determine growth, fructification and the quality of this fruit), the natural conditions of the geographic area and the expertise of the growers:

- terraces with stony impoverished soils, detrital molasse from the Pliocène period, covered or not by old alluvial deposits from the Quaternary period, modern alluvial soils which are all well-drained allowing water to flow and the texture of which limits the bacteria attacks to which these apricot trees are greatly susceptible;

- the ‘Abricots rouges du Roussillon’ benefit from maximum sunshine and natural thermal concentration linked to the geographical configuration of the area which ensures that they are grown to an excellent level of ripeness up to 450 metres in altitude, when exposed to optimal conditions;
- the hydrographic network is sufficient to ensure a good water supply in demanding circumstances for these trees which have few requirements and are well suited to drought;
- the Mediterranean’s proximity results in mild winters in the production area, though with sufficient cool air brought by the ‘Tramontane’ (strong wind from the north-west) to break dormancy. The presence of this strong wind, which is very active in spring, ensures that these self-fertile varieties are pollinated, speeds up the time they take to ripen and hinders the development of cryptogamic diseases. However, these trees require low pruning which makes it easier to harvest the apricots by hand and, in the most exposed locations, the presence of hedges acting as windbreaks which create a distinctive landscape;
- the apricot trees have a natural balance which ensures regular production without the need for annual pruning;
- the high levels of light correspond to the needs of the varieties used in order to ensure good flower induction. High summer temperatures and sunshine duration, combined with the open centre of the trees with their multi-scaffold branches which increases the leaf surface area exposed to light, are favourable for the fruit to ripen. They contribute to the development of its visual characteristics, through the appearance of red pigments, and those related to its taste with its richness in sugars and sweetness accentuated by its low acidity;
- practices ensuring maximum preservation of the fruit’s unblemished wholeness such as harvesting which must be carried out by hand, a short time span between when the fruit is harvested and packed, and optimal and limited conditions during storage where necessary.

Moreover, the area’s natural conditions are adequate regarding the production requirements of the ‘Abricots rouges du Roussillon’, as shown by the lack of commercial production of these apricots outside of the geographic area.

Thus, despite market trends towards larger two-tone products, the ‘Abricots rouges du Roussillon’ have been able to ‘endure through the ages’ and maintain the market share warranted by their unique characteristics and flavour.

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-d847cc43-7623-4f35-9a4e-18ac66f4b67e
