EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Publication of an application for registration of a name 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

(2019/C 320/06)

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) within three months from the date of this publication.

SINGLE DOCUMENT

‘BJELOVARSKI KVARGL’
EU No: PGI-HR-02382 — 3.1.2018
PDO ( ) PGI (X)

1. Name(s)
‘Bjelovarski kvargl’

2. Member State or Third Country
Croatia

3. Description of the agricultural product or foodstuff

3.1. Type of product
Class 1.3. Cheeses

3.2. Description of product to which the name in (1) applies
‘Bjelovarski kvargl’ cheese is a product derived from fresh cow’s milk cheese which, after draining, is mixed with salt and paprika and shaped into small pointed cones which are then dried and smoked. The ‘Bjelovarski kvargl’ cheese is produced in the traditional way, exclusively by hand.

It comes in the form of a pointed cone, with a diameter of between 40 mm and 65 mm, a height of between 70 mm and 100 mm, and a weight of 60 g to 110 g. The paste has a firm consistency and a dense texture. The colour of the finished product varies from pale grey to dark red; slicing through it horizontally reveals a pinkish colour with clearly visible white grains. The taste is mildly acidic and slightly strong and it smells of smoke, with a pronounced aroma of paprika. The maximum pH of the finished product is 4.9, with a milk fat content of 14.5 g/100 g.

3.3. Feed (for products of animal origin only) and raw materials (for processed products only)
‘Bjelovarski kvargl’ cheese is produced from drained fresh cow’s milk cheese. The following ingredients are used in its production: salt, paprika, and occasionally garlic.

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

All of the steps, from processing of the raw material to production of the finished product, must take place within the geographical area defined under point 4. If the product is not placed on the market immediately, it is wrapped in PVC foil and placed in a refrigeration device, where it may remain for up to 15 days in order to preserve its freshness.

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

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

4. Concise definition of the geographical area

'Bjelovarski kvargl' cheese is produced in Bjelovar-Bilogora County, bordered to the north by Koprivnica-Križevci County, to the north-east by Virovitica-Podravina County, to the south by Sisak-Moslavina County and to the west by Zagreb County. There are five towns in Bjelovar-Bilogora County: Bjelovar, Čazma, Daruvar, Gorešnica and Grubišno polje, and 18 municipalities: Berek, Dežanovac, Dulovac, Hercegova, Ivanška, Kapela, Končanica, Nova Rača, Rovnišće, Severin, Sirač, Sandrovac, Stanoj, Velika Pisanica, Veliki Grdevac, Veliko Trojstvo, Velika Trnovitica and Zrinjski Topolovac.

5. Link with the geographical area

Protection of the 'Bjelovarski kvargl' product is based on its traditional method of production in Bjelovar-Bilogora County, earning it a long-standing reputation, which it has retained to this day.

Bjelovar-Bilogora County is located in the north-western part of Croatia. The defined geographical area is dominated by low-lying grassy areas. Because of this the local population has practised agriculture and livestock farming there since ancient times. Milk and milk products are important ingredients in many of the dishes consumed by the inhabitants of the Bjelovar-Bilogora area. The oldest documentary records show that even as long as 200 years ago the population of the Bjelovar-Bilogora area raised livestock and produced cheese.

The milk product most commonly used as an ingredient in various dishes was fresh cow's milk cheese or preparations thereof. As fresh cow's milk cheese has a limited shelf life, small local producers came up with and refined a way in which to obtain a cheese from fresh cow's milk cheese which could be consumed over a longer period of time, involving air-drying and smoking. This method has indeed extended the shelf life of the cheese. This process is closely tied to the knowledge and skill of the local producers, which is crucial for binding the entire mixture and making it soft. This method of production has become traditional, as the whole process of making the cheese is conducted exclusively by hand, and, underpinned by knowledge and experience, is passed down from generation to generation.

The difference between 'Bjelovarski kvargl', 'Turoš' cheese (produced in Međimurje County) and 'Prgica' cheese (from Varaždin County) was demonstrated by K. Valkaj in his doctoral dissertation in 2015, for which he also conducted scientific research (Valkaj K (2015), Medimurski turoš u odnosu na varaždinsku prgicu i bjelovarski kvargl, doctoral dissertation). The results of the research confirmed that there were perceptible differences between the traditional methods of production, chemical composition, physical characteristics, textures and organoleptic properties (taste and aroma) of the various cheeses. The main way in which the method of production of 'Bjelovarski kvargl' differs from that of the cheeses 'Turoš' and 'Prgica' is that after drying, 'Bjelovarski kvargl' also undergoes smoking (for up to 3 hours), whereas 'Turoš' and 'Prgica' do not. The shape of the cone of 'Bjelovarski kvargl' is more pointed than that of 'Prgica' or 'Turoš'.

The reputation of 'Bjelovarski kvargl' in more recent times is demonstrated by the fact that its name and traditional method of preparation have been mentioned in specialist milk- and cheese-related periodicals, such as the March 2013 edition of Mlijeko i ja ['Milk and me'] magazine.

'Bjelovarski kvargl' is not produced industrially; each stage of processing is conducted in the traditional way — exclusively by hand and using traditional equipment. This further underscores the importance of the know-how preserved on small farmsteads in Bjelovar-Bilogora County; the processes of drying and smoking the product extend its shelf life, keeping it consumable for longer than ordinary fresh cheese.

The causal link between 'Bjelovarski kvargl' and the defined geographical area, Bjelovar-Bilogora County, is based on the reputation of the product and its traditional method of production.

Specific reference to the reputation of the product 'Bjelovarski kvargl' began to be made at the end of the 20th and beginning of the 21st century when food tasting events were held in the region comprising the town of Bjelovar and surrounds. Such events are still being held today. One of the events, held on many consecutive years, is the International Bjelovar Fair (Međunarodni bjelovarski sajam), at which agricultural producers exhibit and sell autochthonous agricultural products from the Bjelovar-Bilogora region, including 'Bjelovarski kvargl' cheese (22nd International Autumn Bjelovar Fair, 2014).

The town of Bjelovar is renowned in Bjelovar-Bilogora County for its centuries-long tradition of milk and cheese production, for which it has been accorded the moniker 'city of cheese'. For this reason Bjelovar has hosted a fair called the 'Cheese days in the city of cheese' ('Dani sir a u gradu sir a' [Cheese days in the city of cheese], catalogue of exhibitors, 2015) since 2006. At the fair, small farms exhibit, promote and sell traditional cheeses from the Bjelovar-Bilogora region, including 'Bjelovarski kvargl'. A special panel of assessors rate the cheeses on show, conferring awards on the best producers.
'Bjelovarski kvargl' cheese has won gold and silver plaques at the trade fair held at Grubišno polje (13th Trade Fair — cheese fair 2015, gold and silver plaques won by family farm OPG Ankica Kraljic, Bjelovar).

Apart from its historical and cultural aspects, the Bjelovar-Bilogora region is also renowned for the diverse gastronomic offering of its catering establishments, which is based on traditional autochthonous products that give the region visibility (Bistro Franc, 2017, menu).

The link between the name 'Bjelovarski kvargl' and the Bjelovar-Bilogora region is evident in the way the region is promoted in several tourist publications, where 'Bjelovarski kvargl' is presented as a traditional speciality forming part of the gastronomic offerings of many of the region's farms (Kapljica turist d.o.o., Na krilima Bilogore [On the wing in Bilogora]).

Global affirmation of 'Bjelovarski kvargl's reputation is also borne out by the most comprehensive global publication on the cheese industry — the 'Cheese' book (Oxford University Press, 2016, Cheese).

Production of the traditional 'Bjelovarski kvargl' cheese by small producers preserves the tradition and prevents the production of traditional milk products from dying out. The reputation of the 'Bjelovarski kvargl' product has managed to be maintained at local level and continues to be preserved thanks to small local producers who have always emphasised its name in their everyday conversations and when placing the product on local markets (Bjelovarski list (2015), 'Bjelovarski kravlji sir ne gubi na popularnosti' ['Bjelovar cow's milk cheese not losing popularity']).

**Reference to publication of the product specification**

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