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II

*(Information)*INFORMATION FROM EUROPEAN UNION INSTITUTIONS, BODIES, OFFICES
AND AGENCIES

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Non-opposition to a notified concentration**(Case M.8830 — Strategic Value Partners/Vita Group)****(Text with EEA relevance)**

(2018/C 132/01)

On 3 April 2018, the Commission decided not to oppose the above notified concentration and to declare it compatible with the internal market. This decision is based on Article 6(1)(b) of Council Regulation (EC) No 139/2004 ⁽¹⁾. The full text of the decision is available only in English and will be made public after it is cleared of any business secrets it may contain. It will be available:

- in the merger section of the Competition website of the Commission (<http://ec.europa.eu/competition/mergers/cases/>). This website provides various facilities to help locate individual merger decisions, including company, case number, date and sectoral indexes,
- in electronic form on the EUR-Lex website (<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/homepage.html?locale=en>) under document number 32018M8830. EUR-Lex is the online access to European law.

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 24, 29.1.2004, p. 1.

IV

*(Notices)*NOTICES FROM EUROPEAN UNION INSTITUTIONS, BODIES, OFFICES AND
AGENCIES

COUNCIL

Notice for the attention of the persons to whom measures provided for in Council Decision 2011/235/CFSP, as amended by Council Decision (CFSP) 2018/568 and in Council Regulation (EU) No 359/2011, as implemented by Council Implementing Regulation (EU) 2018/565 concerning restrictive measures directed against certain persons, entities and bodies in view of the situation in Iran apply

(2018/C 132/02)

The following information is brought to the attention of the persons that appear in the Annex to Council Decision 2011/235/CFSP⁽¹⁾, as amended by Council Decision (CFSP) 2018/568⁽²⁾, and in Annex I to Council Regulation (EU) No 359/2011⁽³⁾, as implemented by Council Implementing Regulation (EU) 2018/565⁽⁴⁾ concerning restrictive measures directed against certain persons, entities and bodies in view of the situation in Iran.

The Council of the European Union has decided that the persons that appear in the above-mentioned Annexes should continue be included in the list of persons and entities subject to restrictive measures provided for in Decision 2011/235/CFSP and in Regulation (EU) No 359/2011.

The attention of the persons concerned is drawn to the possibility of making an application to the competent authorities of the relevant Member State(s) as indicated on the websites in Annex II to Regulation (EU) No 359/2011, in order to obtain an authorisation to use frozen funds for basic needs or specific payments (cf. Article 4 of the Regulation).

The persons concerned may submit a request to the Council before 31 December 2018, together with supporting documentation that the decision to include them on the above-mentioned list should be reconsidered to the following address:

Council of the European Union
DG C 1C — Horizontal Issues Unit
General Secretariat
Rue de la Loi/Wetstraat 175
1048 Bruxelles/Brussel
BELGIQUE/BELGIË

Email: sanctions@consilium.europa.eu

The attention of the persons concerned is also drawn to the possibility of challenging the Council's decision before the General Court of the European Union, in accordance with the conditions laid down in Article 275, second paragraph, and Article 263, fourth and sixth paragraphs, of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 100, 14.4.2011, p. 51.

⁽²⁾ OJ L 95, 13.4.2018, p. 14.

⁽³⁾ OJ L 100, 14.4.2011, p. 1.

⁽⁴⁾ OJ L 95, 13.4.2018, p. 1.

Notice for the attention of the data subjects to whom the restrictive measures provided for in Council Regulation (EU) No 359/2011 concerning restrictive measures directed against certain persons, entities and bodies in view of the situation in Iran apply

(2018/C 132/03)

The attention of data subjects is drawn to the following information in accordance with Article 12 of Regulation (EC) No 45/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council ⁽¹⁾:

The legal basis for this processing operation is Council Regulation (EU) No 359/2011 ⁽²⁾.

The controller of this processing operation is the Council of the European Union represented by the Director General of DG C (Foreign Affairs, Enlargement, Civil Protection) of the General Secretariat of the Council and the department entrusted with the processing operation is the Unit 1C of DG C that can be contacted at:

Council of the European Union
General Secretariat
DG C 1C - Horizontal Issues Unit
Rue de la Loi/Wetstraat 175
1048 Bruxelles/Brussel
BELGIQUE/BELGIË

E-mail: sanctions@consilium.europa.eu

The purpose of the processing operation is the establishment and updating of the list of persons subject to restrictive measures in accordance with Regulation (EU) No 359/2011.

The data subjects are the natural persons who fulfil listing criteria as laid down in that Regulation.

The personal data collected includes data necessary for the correct identification of the person concerned, the Statement of Reasons and any other data related thereto.

The personal data collected may be shared as necessary with the European External Action Service and the Commission.

Without prejudice to restrictions provided for in Article 20(1)(a) and (d) of Regulation (EC) No 45/2001, requests for access, as well as requests for rectification or objection will be answered in accordance with section 5 of Council Decision 2004/644/EC ⁽³⁾.

Personal data will be retained for 5 years from the moment the data subject has been removed from the list of persons subject to the asset freeze or the validity of the measure has expired, or for the duration of court proceedings in the event they had been started.

Data subjects may have recourse to the European Data Protection Supervisor in accordance with Regulation (EC) No 45/2001.

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 8, 12.1.2001, p. 1.

⁽²⁾ OJ L 100, 14.4.2011, p. 1.

⁽³⁾ OJ L 296, 21.9.2004, p. 16.

Notice for the attention of certain persons subject to the restrictive measures provided for in Council Decision 2013/255/CFSP and Council Regulation (EU) No 36/2012 concerning restrictive measures in view of the situation in Syria

(2018/C 132/04)

The following information is brought to the attention of Mr Abd Al-Fatah Qudsiyah (no. 9), Mr Zoulhima Chaliche (no. 23), Major General Rafiq Shahadah (no. 37), Major General Talal Makhluaf (no. 79), Major General Nazih Hassun (no. 80), Mr Emad Abdul-Ghani Sabouni (no. 114), Mr Tayseer Qala Awwad (no. 116), General Amer al-Achi (no. 147) and Major General Muhamad Mahalla (no. 206), persons appearing in the Annex I to Council Decision 2013/255/CFSP ⁽¹⁾ and in Annex II to Council Regulation (EU) No 36/2012 ⁽²⁾ concerning restrictive measures in view of the situation in Syria.

The Council intends to maintain the restrictive measures against the above-mentioned persons with new statements of reasons. Those persons are hereby informed that they may submit a request to the Council to obtain the intended statements of reasons for their designation, before 19 April 2018, to the following address:

Council of the European Union
General Secretariat
DG C 1C
Rue de la Loi/Wetstraat 175
1048 Bruxelles/Brussel
BELGIQUE/BELGIË

Email: sanctions@consilium.europa.eu

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 147, 1.6.2013, p. 14.

⁽²⁾ OJ L 16, 19.1.2012, p. 1.

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Euro exchange rates ⁽¹⁾

12 April 2018

(2018/C 132/05)

1 euro =

Currency	Exchange rate	Currency	Exchange rate		
USD	US dollar	1,2323	CAD	Canadian dollar	1,5517
JPY	Japanese yen	132,04	HKD	Hong Kong dollar	9,6734
DKK	Danish krone	7,4451	NZD	New Zealand dollar	1,6700
GBP	Pound sterling	0,86745	SGD	Singapore dollar	1,6155
SEK	Swedish krona	10,3723	KRW	South Korean won	1 319,86
CHF	Swiss franc	1,1876	ZAR	South African rand	14,7838
ISK	Iceland króna	122,00	CNY	Chinese yuan renminbi	7,7452
NOK	Norwegian krone	9,5973	HRK	Croatian kuna	7,4213
BGN	Bulgarian lev	1,9558	IDR	Indonesian rupiah	16 968,15
CZK	Czech koruna	25,316	MYR	Malaysian ringgit	4,7770
HUF	Hungarian forint	311,40	PHP	Philippine peso	64,102
PLN	Polish zloty	4,1844	RUB	Russian rouble	75,8954
RON	Romanian leu	4,6615	THB	Thai baht	38,448
TRY	Turkish lira	5,0473	BRL	Brazilian real	4,1482
AUD	Australian dollar	1,5893	MXN	Mexican peso	22,3815
			INR	Indian rupee	80,4170

⁽¹⁾ Source: reference exchange rate published by the ECB.

COURT OF AUDITORS

Special Report No 8/2018

'EU support for productive investments in businesses — greater focus on durability needed'

(2018/C 132/06)

The European Court of Auditors hereby informs you that Special Report No 8/2018 'EU support for productive investments in businesses — greater focus on durability needed' has just been published.

The report can be accessed for consultation or downloading on the European Court of Auditors' website: <http://eca.europa.eu>

V

(Announcements)

OTHER ACTS

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Publication of an application for approval of a minor amendment in accordance with the second subparagraph of Article 53(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council on quality schemes for agricultural products and foodstuffs

(2018/C 132/07)

The European Commission has approved this minor amendment in accordance with the third subparagraph of Article 6(2) of Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No 664/2014 ⁽¹⁾.

APPLICATION FOR APPROVAL OF A MINOR AMENDMENT

Application for approval of a minor amendment in accordance with the second subparagraph of Article 53(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council ⁽²⁾**'PARMIGIANO REGGIANO'**

EU No: PDO-IT-02202 — 14.11.2016

PDO (X) PGI () TSG ()

1. Applicant group and legitimate interest

Consorzio del Formaggio Parmigiano-Reggiano
Head office: Via J. F. Kennedy 18
42124 Reggio Emilia RE
ITALIA

Tel. +39 0522307741
Fax +39 0522307748
Email: staff@parmigianoreggiano.it

The Parmigiano Reggiano Cheese Consortium is formed by 'Parmigiano Reggiano' cheesemakers. It is authorised to submit an amendment application under Article 13(1) of Ministry of Agricultural, Food and Forestry Policy Decree No 12511 of 14 October 2013.

2. Member State or Third Country

Italy

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

- Description of product
- Proof of origin
- Method of production
- Link
- Labelling
- Other (packaging, update of legislation, cow feeding rules)

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 179, 19.6.2014, p. 17.

⁽²⁾ OJ L 343, 14.12.2012, p. 1.

4. Type of amendment(s)

- Amendment to product specification of registered PDO or PGI to be qualified as minor in accordance with the third subparagraph of Article 53(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012, that requires no amendment to the published single document
- Amendment to product specification of registered PDO or PGI to be qualified as minor in accordance with the third subparagraph of Article 53(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012, that requires an amendment to the published single document
- Amendment to product specification of registered PDO or PGI to be qualified as minor in accordance with the third subparagraph of Article 53(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012, for which a single document (or equivalent) has not been published.
- Amendment to product specification of registered TSG to be qualified as minor in accordance with the fourth subparagraph of Article 53(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012.

5. Amendment(s)

'Proof of origin' amendments

'Cheese Production Standards'

New provisions have been added to improve the traceability of grated and portioned 'Parmigiano Reggiano' and ensure compliance with Article 4 of Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 668/2014 ⁽¹⁾.

- Page 3 of the specification currently states that 'grated cheese and portions (with or without rind) must be packaged within the area of origin in order to guarantee quality, traceability and control'. The following text will now be placed immediately afterwards:

'The traceability of the original wheel (registration number, month/year of production and weight) must therefore always be guaranteed whenever "Parmigiano Reggiano" is to be grated or portioned.'

In order to improve the traceability of 'Parmigiano Reggiano' cheese that is cut or grated and packaged within the defined geographical area, operators are now required to ensure that they are in a position to guarantee that the original wheel of 'Parmigiano Reggiano' from which grated or portioned cheese originates can be traced (registration number, month/year of production and weight).

This should be classified as a minor amendment because it does not affect any of the circumstances listed in the third subparagraph of Article 53(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012. In particular, it does not represent any increase in restrictions on trade in the product.

- The following text has been inserted into page 4:

'Operators (dairy farmers, dairies, ripening premises, graters and portion-cutters) are registered with the control system and listed on registers kept by the inspection body. By keeping records under a self-regulation system, subject to checks by the inspection body, operators ensure that they can demonstrate the origin of feedstuffs, raw materials and products from the area of origin, as well as the supplier and recipient. Incoming consignments, outgoing consignments and the correlation between them must be recorded at each stage.'

This amendment is made in order to comply with Article 4 of Implementing Regulation (EU) No 668/2014. It is to be qualified as a minor amendment because it does not affect any of the circumstances listed in the third subparagraph of Article 53(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012.

'Method of production' amendments

'Cheese Production Standards'

Changes have been made to a number of the rules concerning the milking process and the transportation and handling of milk at the dairy. There are also new provisions on the fat-to-casein ratio of the milk and certain specific analytical values for 'Parmigiano Reggiano' cheese, to ensure better protection and assurance for the consumer.

- The following passage on page 1:

'The maximum time available for the entire farm to complete each of the two permitted daily milking sessions is four hours.'

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 179, 19.6.2014, p. 36.

has been amended as follows:

'For milk to be used for the PDO, the maximum time available for the entire farm to complete each of the two permitted daily milking sessions, including transportation to the dairy, is seven hours.'

The phrase 'for milk to be used for the PDO' has been added to the specification to make it clear that the time limit does not apply to any milk not used to make 'Parmigiano Reggiano'. As this is merely a clarification and it does not affect the production of 'Parmigiano Reggiano', it is a minor amendment.

The maximum milking time has also been increased from the present limit of four hours to seven hours (including transport time, which, as was already stated in the specification, cannot exceed two hours) to afford greater flexibility in actual milking times, allow new milking technology to be used, and permit a better streamlining of facility use and milk hygiene standards.

Increasing the maximum milking time from four to seven hours is to be qualified as a minor amendment because it has no impact on how the milk is processed or on the maturing of the cheese — and thus does not affect the product's essential characteristics — as milk tends to have a very low bacterial load nowadays and can therefore be stored for longer at 18 °C (bacterial load has dropped sharply over the last five years, with an average plate count of around 30 000 per millilitre, well below the legal limit of 100 000 per millilitre), so much so that 'Parmigiano Reggiano' has not needed to use the derogation on microbial loads provided in Italian health legislation (Article 9 of Presidential Decree No 54/97 (implementing Council Directives 92/46/EEC ⁽¹⁾ and 92/47/EEC ⁽²⁾ on the production and placing on the market of milk and milk-based products)) since 2014.

- The following passage has been added to page 1 (the same text has also been added to the single document under point 3.4):

'The fat-to-casein ratio of the milk in the heating vats, calculated as the weighted average of all batches in a given day's production, cannot exceed 1,1 + 12 %.'

The reason for specifying the fat-to-casein ratio of the milk in the heating vats is that this express reference is the only reliable, informative way of measuring the fat content of the end product. Said ratio cannot exceed 1,1 + 12 %. This value of 1,1 is an average figure that has become established over the years in traditional 'Parmigiano Reggiano' cheesemaking, while the 12 % tolerance margin reflects the fact that the values detected in 'Parmigiano Reggiano' can vary significantly due to the use of traditional cheesemaking methods and differences in the fat content of the milk, influenced by seasonal fluctuations and farming methods. This change stems from the need to prevent cheesemaking practices that could jeopardise the product's essential characteristics — more extreme ratios (above 1,23) would compromise the cheese's distinctive texture (fine-grained and flaky).

The inclusion of this value is therefore to be considered a minor amendment because it does not involve any change to the essential characteristics of 'Parmigiano Reggiano', but rather — as an objective value that can be scientifically tested — provides a way of guaranteeing the characteristic texture of the cheese.

- The following passage on page 1:

'Up to 15 % of the morning milk can be set aside for the next day's cheesemaking. This milk must be kept at the dairy in suitable steel containers; if it is chilled, the temperature may not be lower than 10 °C.'

has been amended as follows:

'Up to 15 % of the morning milk can be set aside for the next day's cheesemaking. This milk, which must be kept at the dairy in suitable steel containers at a temperature not lower than 10 °C, must be left to stand in the skimming tanks, together with the evening milk, to allow the cream to rise to the surface.'

This instruction on the portion of the morning milk set aside for the next day — i.e. the requirement that it be left to stand in the skimming tanks that same evening — is to prevent the possibility of the milk being kept as it is (unskimmed) until the next morning.

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 268, 14.9.1992, p. 1.

⁽²⁾ OJ L 268, 14.9.1992, p. 33.

This is to be considered a minor amendment because it does not affect the product's essential characteristics. It simply aims to provide a better description of a step in the production method.

- The following has been added to the list on page 2 that is introduced by “‘Parmigiano Reggiano’ has the following characteristics’:

- ‘— no additives’

In the current specification, this characteristic is only listed for grated cheese, whereas in fact it applies to all ‘Parmigiano Reggiano’, regardless of format. The absence of additives has therefore been added to the list of general characteristics of ‘Parmigiano Reggiano’.

The fact that the product contains no additives was already mentioned in point 3.3 of the single document (‘Raw materials (for processed products only)’), according to which ‘the use of additives is not permitted’. However, given that, as mentioned above, this is a characteristic that applies to all ‘Parmigiano Reggiano’ cheese, this characteristic (the absence of additives) has now been added to point 3.2 of the single document (‘Description of the product to which the name in (1) applies’). Therefore, in order to avoid duplication, the reference has been removed from point 3.3.

This is to be considered a minor amendment, seeing as it merely aims to place the characteristics of ‘Parmigiano Reggiano’ in a more logical order and does not affect the product's essential characteristics.

- The reference to the amino acid profile (“‘Parmigiano Reggiano’'s typical amino acid profile’), listed under the introduction “‘Parmigiano Reggiano’ has the following characteristics:’ on page 2:

has been amended as follows:

- ‘— total free amino acids of more than 15 % of total proteins (calculated using HPLC and ion-exchange chromatography)’

The amino acid profile has been added to the list of characteristics of ‘Parmigiano Reggiano’ because this value is currently only listed for grated cheese, whereas this is in fact a characteristic that applies to all ‘Parmigiano Reggiano’ cheese, regardless of format.

A minimum threshold is now specified for total free amino acids as a percentage of total protein (the new text is ‘total free amino acids of more than 15 % of total proteins’). As the end product of the breaking down of proteins by enzymes as the cheese matures, amino acids are closely linked to the age of the cheese itself, ageing being a minimum requirement that must be met in order to classify a cheese as ‘Parmigiano Reggiano’. A lower percentage than the established value can be traced back to a maturing period of less than 12 months.

This is to be considered a minor amendment because it does not affect the product's essential characteristics. Rather, it aims to provide a better definition of a requirement that was already included in the product specification.

- The following requirements have been added to the list introduced by the text “‘Parmigiano Reggiano’ has the following characteristics:’ on page 2 (the same text has also been added to the single document under point 3.2):

- ‘— “‘Parmigiano Reggiano’'s typical isotopic and mineral profiles, as filed at the Parmigiano Reggiano Cheese Consortium, the inspection body and the Ministry of Agricultural, Food and Forestry Policy, and calculated using isotope-ratio mass spectrometry (IRMS) techniques

- a cyclopropane fatty acid ratio of less than 22 mg per 100 g of fat (already accounting for uncertainty of measurement, gas chromatography-mass spectrometry (CG-MS) method)’

To improve the effectiveness of authenticity checks on ‘Parmigiano Reggiano’ — rindless portions and grated cheese in particular — by both the inspection body itself and the authorities responsible for carrying out the actual inspections, specific analytical parameters have been inserted. These parameters were determined following research, experimentation and documentation of the authentic and unvarying local methods used to make ‘Parmigiano Reggiano’ cheese. In particular, given the growing presence of ‘generic’ hard cheeses on markets around the world, it was necessary to introduce new analytical values denoting characteristics that are unique to ‘Parmigiano Reggiano’.

Following an analysis of stable isotope ratios and macro- and micro-nutrients, a database has been set up that defines and characterises 'Parmigiano Reggiano' cheese and makes it possible to tell whether or not a product comes from the defined area of origin. This is due to the fact that many of the nutrients ingested in a dairy cow's diet (fodder, forage, water, etc.) are then secreted into the milk through the specific biochemical and physiological mechanisms involved in milk production. Each ingredient of a cow's diet has its own mineral composition and set of stable isotopes, which are determined by the specific characteristics and geographical origin of the plant species and/or variety (maize, for example, has a significantly higher presence of the Carbon-13 isotope than the average level found in other plant species used for feeding domestic animals). Similarly, a single plant species may present differing levels of certain minerals depending on the geographical area. This is because every plant is a reflection of the specific features of the land on which it is grown or harvested, as well as the water it takes in (water drains elements from rock, so its qualitative and quantitative composition varies depending on the location of the source).

By testing for cyclopropane fatty acids, it is, however, possible to check whether cheese has been made using milk from cows fed with silage, which is banned by the specification. Cyclopropane fatty acids are fatty acids of microbial origin that are released into fodder during the bacterial fermentation that occurs during the ensiling process. As they are absorbed as such and used for synthesising milk fat, they have been detected in milk from cows fed on silage (maize silage in particular) and products derived from that milk (cream, butter, cheese), whereas their absence from other products used to feed cattle means that they are never found in the milk of cows whose diet is silage-free. Therefore, a maximum cyclopropane fatty acid limit is now specified for 'Parmigiano Reggiano' cheese, namely 22 mg per 100 g. This figure, which takes measurement uncertainty into account, was determined using the gas chromatography-mass spectrometry (GC-MS) method.

Including these values does not alter the product's essential characteristics in any way, but rather allows the authenticity of the product to be verified. The above changes are therefore considered minor amendments.

— The following passage on page 3:

'This designation can only be used for grated cheese that meets the following technical and scientific requirements:'

has been amended as follows:

'This designation can only be used for grated cheese that also meets the following technical and scientific requirements:'

The adverb 'also' has been added to emphasise the fact that, in addition to the requirements that are common to all 'Parmigiano Reggiano' cheese and are listed in previous sections of the specification, grated cheese must also meet certain specific conditions — minimum moisture content, appearance and maximum amount of rind — which are already present in the current product specification.

This is to be classed as a minor amendment because it does not affect the essential characteristics of 'Parmigiano Reggiano' cheese.

— The following values have been removed from the list on page 3 introduced by 'This designation can only be used for grated cheese that also meets the following technical and scientific requirements':

— no additives

— "Parmigiano Reggiano"'s typical amino acid profile'

These conditions have been deleted from this section because, as stated above, they are not just features of grated cheese, but are in fact characteristics that apply to all 'Parmigiano Reggiano' cheese, regardless of format. They have therefore been included in the part of the specification dealing with the generic characteristics of 'Parmigiano Reggiano'.

'Labelling' amendments

'Cheese Production Standards'

A number of labelling rules have been introduced in order to be more transparent towards consumers.

- The following passage has been added to page 3 (the same text has also been included in the single document under point 3.6):

‘So that consumers can correctly identify its age, all pre-packaged “Parmigiano Reggiano” portions of more than 15 g placed on the market must be labelled with minimum maturity.’

For greater protection and to improve transparency for consumers, the minimum maturity must be stated on the labels of all pre-packaged ‘Parmigiano Reggiano’ portions of more than 15 g placed on the market. As the maturity of ‘Parmigiano Reggiano’ — ranging from a minimum period of 12 months to over 36 months — is a variable that has a major impact on its structural and organoleptic features, it is considered advisable and necessary to inform consumers about the maturity of the cheese they are about to purchase.

This should be classified as a minor amendment because it does not affect any of the circumstances listed in the third subparagraph of Article 53(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012.

- The following text has been inserted into page 4:

‘Stating the dairy’s registration number or name on the label is only compulsory in the case of grated cheese or portions originating from cheeses marked as “Premium” pursuant to Article 15 of the “Rules on Identity Markings”.’

The product specification now states that pre-packaged, grated or portioned ‘Parmigiano Reggiano’ cheese using the new voluntary ‘Premium’ marking must be labelled with the dairy’s registration number or name so that consumers have producer information for this product type.

This is clearly a minor amendment because it does not affect any of the circumstances listed in the third subparagraph of Article 53(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012.

‘Rules on Identity Markings’

There are changes to the provisions on the procedure for challenging the verdict of a quality inspection. It is also considered that the specification needs to be clearer on when a cheese can acquire PDO status and under which conditions. There are also changes to the rules on voluntary markings and the conditions for using them.

- The following passage from Article 11 (entitled ‘Challenging an inspection verdict’):

‘1. Dairies may challenge the verdict of a quality inspection by writing to the Consortium by recorded delivery up to four days after the end of the inspection.’

has been amended as follows:

‘1. Dairies may challenge the verdict of a quality inspection by writing to the Consortium by recorded delivery up to four days after the end of each individual quality inspection session.’

As practical problems have been observed in the ways to challenge the verdict of a quality inspection, it is now specified that any such challenge must be lodged at the end of each individual quality inspection session, and not at the end of the entire batch. At medium-sized and large dairies where more than one day is needed for quality inspection tasks, the quality markings must be attached or removed at the end of each individual quality inspection session so as to avoid blocking off an entire batch.

This should be classified as a minor amendment because it does not affect any of the circumstances listed in the third subparagraph of Article 53(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012. It merely concerns the procedure for challenging the verdict of a quality inspection.

- A new paragraph 1 has been inserted into Article 14 (‘Transferring cheeses before the twelfth month’):

‘1. Cheese can be marketed under the protected name “Parmigiano Reggiano” provided that it bears the oval quality stamp and has been matured for at least the minimum twelve-month period.’

In the interests of clarity, it is now specified that, in order to meet the PDO requirements and to be marketed as 'Parmigiano Reggiano', a cheese must bear the oval quality stamp and have been matured for at least the minimum twelve-month period.

This is to be qualified as a minor amendment because it merely clarifies aspects that were already implicit in the specification.

The previous text of Article 14 is now Article 14(2).

— *Article 15*

“Export” and “Extra” markings

Once a “Parmigiano-Reggiano” cheese reaches its 18th month of maturation, an application may be made to the Consortium to use the “Parmigiano Reggiano Export” marking (see image 3) or the “Parmigiano Reggiano Extra” marking (see image 4). In order to bear these markings, the cheese must meet the requirements to be labelled as “Parmigiano Reggiano scelto sperlato” (denoting “certified top quality”) pursuant to Article 7. Certified wheels of cheese that have matured for 18 months can earn the right to use these markings even if they have been taken outside the production area to continue maturing, in which case the necessary agreement must be reached with the Consortium so that it can perform its supervisory activities. Any costs incurred in marking operations are to be borne by the applicant.’

has been amended as follows:

Article 15

“Export” and “Premium” markings

1. Once a “Parmigiano-Reggiano” cheese reaches its 18th month of maturation, an application may be made to the Consortium to use the “Export” marking. In order to bear this marking, the cheese must meet the requirements to be labelled as “Parmigiano Reggiano scelto sperlato” pursuant to the Annex referred to in Article 7.
2. Once a “Parmigiano-Reggiano” cheese reaches its 24th month of maturation, an application may be made to the Consortium to use the “Premium” marking. In order to bear this marking, the cheese must meet the requirements to be labelled as “Parmigiano Reggiano scelto sperlato” pursuant to the Annex referred to in Article 7. Each batch of cheese matured must be subject to sensory testing, and the right to use this marking will be only be granted to cheese that obtains better results in this testing process than the average “Parmigiano Reggiano”, in accordance with operating arrangements laid down by the Consortium.
3. Certified wheels of cheese that have matured for 18 months can earn the right to use these markings even if they have been taken outside the production area to continue maturing.
4. Any costs incurred in marking operations are to be borne by the applicant.’

The title of this Article has changed, with the word ‘Extra’ replaced by the word ‘Premium’. The voluntary ‘Extra’ marking has been removed due to lack of use, given that it is interchangeable, in terms of functions and characteristics, with the more widely used voluntary ‘Export’ marking. In place of the ‘Extra’ marking, a new voluntary marking, ‘Premium’, has been introduced, as an incentive to producers to both improve quality and increase maturation periods of ‘Parmigiano Reggiano’ cheese. As the ‘Premium’ label was created to be a superior quality category, it is applied to cheeses that, as well as meeting the requirements to call themselves ‘Parmigiano Reggiano scelto sperlato’ (denoting ‘certified top quality’), have also been matured for at least 24 months. Moreover, each batch of cheeses matured must also be tested to ensure that their sensory attributes are suitable for this label, as compared to average ‘Parmigiano Reggiano’ cheese. As voluntary markings are attached to ‘Parmigiano Reggiano’ cheeses, it was considered superfluous to include the words ‘Parmigiano Reggiano’ on those voluntary markings so this has now been removed. Moreover, to remove graphical restraints, logos for voluntary markings are no longer provided in the ‘Rules on Identity Markings’. It is also no longer specified that an agreement has to be reached with the Consortium so that it can perform its supervisory activities because this is not actually a supervisory activity but rather the granting of permission to use a voluntary marking under certain conditions.

This is to be considered a minor amendment as it concerns markings that can be used to label the product on a voluntary basis once the product has already been certified.

‘Product classification’ Annex

A provision has been added to clarify the point in the ‘lifetime’ of the cheese at which the ‘Product classification’ applies.

— The following sentence has been added:

‘This classification applies to the cheese at the time of quality inspection.’

Under Article 6 (‘Cheese classification’) of the ‘Rules on Identity Markings’, the classification established in the ‘Product Classification’ Annex must be applied in quality inspections.

The product classification laid down in that Annex has been clarified. It is now specified that this classification refers exclusively to how the cheese is at the time of quality inspection. The classification cannot actually ensure that a cheese is entirely free of hidden defects or that defects will not develop once the markings have been applied. This could happen for a number of reasons, notably including storage in conditions that are unsuitable for maturing and preserving the cheese, which could intensify or deteriorate the characteristics of the cheese and rind or minor defects detected in the quality inspection. In recent years there have been complaints from the inspection authorities about the fact that, in checks carried out some months after the quality inspection, some cheeses had structural characteristics that no longer met the product requirements laid down in the specification. As has already been mentioned, the quality inspection activity refers to the time when the cheeses are checked. It is not possible to guarantee that the cheese will retain the characteristics throughout its entire ‘life’.

This is to be considered a minor amendment because it does not affect the product’s essential characteristics but is merely a clarification on the product classification.

‘Other’ amendments

Packaging amendments

‘Cheese Production Standards’

An amendment has been made to bring the Italian terminology used in the specification into line with Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012.

— The following passage on page 3:

‘Grated cheese and portions (with or without rind) must be packaged (*note: the Italian term used is condizionamento*) within the area of origin in order to guarantee quality, traceability and control.’

has been amended as follows:

‘Grated cheese and portions (with or without rind) must be packaged (*note: the Italian term used is confezionamento*) within the area of origin in order to guarantee quality, traceability and control.’

To match the terminology used in Article 7(1)(e) of Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012, the word *confezionamento* is now used for ‘packaging’, rather than *condizionamento*.

This should be considered a minor amendment because it merely consists of a change in terminology to match the term used in the applicable legislation.

Amendments to update legislation

‘Rules on Identity Markings’

— The following, which used to be the second sentence of paragraph 1 of Article 2 (Duties of the ‘Parmigiano Reggiano’ Cheese Consortium):

‘If a body responsible for checking compliance with the specification submitted pursuant to Council Regulation (EEC) No 2081/92 (as amended) observes the incorrect use of markings of origin or any other breach of the specification, the Consortium may confiscate marking stencils and nameplates and/or impose penalties as established in the applicable regulations.’

has been amended as follows:

‘If a body responsible for checking compliance with the specification submitted pursuant to Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012 (as amended) observes the incorrect use of markings of origin or any other breach of the specification, the Consortium may confiscate marking stencils and nameplates and/or impose penalties as established in the applicable regulations.’

Since Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012 is now in force, the references to legislation need to be updated, replacing the reference to Council Regulation (EEC) No 2081/92 with a reference to Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012.

*Amendments to cow feeding rules**'Cow Feeding Rules'*

There are changes to the rules on performing agricultural activities other than dairy cattle rearing on the same farm, 'single meal' feeding techniques, and how raw materials are administered in dairy cows' diets.

— The following passage from Article 5 ('Banned fodder and by-products'):

'If livestock is kept for meat, it should be reared at different premises and kept separate from dairy cows.

Farms may not, however, possess any grass silage or by-products (such as beet pulp, tomato skins, etc.) preserved in wrapped bales, trench silos, bunker silos or using any other technique.'

has been amended as follows:

'Farms on which dairy cows are reared must ensure that entirely separate premises are used for any other farming activities (non-dairy activities, such as rearing cattle for beef, operating digesters, etc.). Silage cereals and by-products may be kept and used for these other farming activities.

Farms may not, however, possess any grass silage preserved in wrapped bales, trench silos, bunker silos or using any other technique.'

It is now specified that the farms on which dairy cattle are reared must ensure that entirely separate premises are used not just for any cattle they rear for beef, but also for any other farming activities they might perform (examples include agricultural activities developed in recent years such as the use of digesters). It is also specified that these farms may possess and use silage cereals and by-products, as keeping activities to entirely separate premises means there is no risk of contamination of the milk and, consequently, the cheese to be sold as 'Parmigiano Reggiano'. For the same reason, the specification no longer goes on to say that farms may not possess silage from by-products (such as beet pulp, tomato skins, etc.) preserved in wrapped bales, trench silos, bunker silos or using any other technique. As with silage cereals and by-products, this silage is permitted as long as it is indeed managed at entirely separate premises for use in other (non-dairy) farming activities. However, there is still a ban on merely possessing grass silage preserved in wrapped bales, trench silos, bunker silos or using any other technique remains in place, even if stored entirely separately.

These changes have no impact on the raw material (milk) used to make 'Parmigiano Reggiano' and consequently do not affect the cheese itself. They are therefore minor amendments.

— The following passage from Article 6 ('Feed raw materials'):

'The following raw materials can be used in the diets fed to dairy cattle following the instructions laid down in the Annex:'

has been amended as follows:

'The following raw materials can be used in the diets fed to dairy cattle:'

Article 11 of the specification ('New products and technological developments') is no longer followed by an Annex on 'Feed raw materials and maximum permitted doses', listing permitted raw materials and upper limits. This change stems from the need to simplify the methods for calculating feed rations for dairy cows, on the one hand, and to facilitate inspections, on the other. Nevertheless, the specification's underlying philosophy, based on specifying banned and permitted feedstuffs and laying down limits in certain cases, remains unchanged. The reason for introducing the Annex in the first place was that there was a need to 'train' operators and standardise their working methods with regard to the permitted raw materials for feed and the maximum doses. There is now no longer any need for such 'black-and-white' instructions — requiring complex and costly checks by the inspection body — because best practices have since been established, farmers are now better trained, and professionals provide more assistance, all of which ensure the quality of dairy cows' diets. The Annex will, however, be included in a manual of good practice to be made available for farmers to consult.

This change has no impact on the raw material (milk) used to make 'Parmigiano Reggiano' and consequently do not affect the cheese itself. It is therefore a minor amendment.

- The following is to be deleted from Article 7 ('Use of simple/compound integrated and non-integrated supplementary feeds'):

'Feed must be administered as instructed in the Annex.'

This amendment is necessary because, as discussed above, this Annex has been deleted.

- The following from Article 10 ('The "single meal" feeding technique'):

'If the feed mix is moistened, mixing must be performed at least twice daily and the feed must be administered immediately after preparation.'

has been amended as follows:

'If the feed mix is moistened (moisture content of 20 % or above), mixing must be performed at least twice daily and the feed must be administered as soon as it is prepared.'

It is now specified that, if water is added to the mix to moisten the feed (this is permitted to make the mixture less powdery and prevent the ingredients from separating), the moisture content must be at least 20 %.

The moisture content above which it can be concluded that water has been added as an ingredient has been set at 20 % for the following reasons:

- (1) exclusively using what can be defined as 'dry food' (hay and feed) would result in a maximum moisture content in the final mix of 13-16 %, i.e. the moisture content of such feedstuffs;
- (2) the specification allows the use (up to a total of 800 g per head per day) of 'sugar preparations — including liquid preparations — based on molasses (beet and cane sugar), malt extract, propylene glycol and glycerol', the average water content of which is around 50 %, adding a further 1,5-2 percentage points to the moisture content;
- (3) both sample-taking and the testing process itself are subject to a certain degree of error.

As a result of these three factors combined, it is only possible to affirm with certainty that a mixture has been moistened (bearing in mind that 'mixing must be performed at least twice daily and the feed must be administered immediately after preparation') at a moisture content of 20 % or above.

The reason for this rule is that high moisture levels can trigger and sustain fermentation of the sugar component, and this fermentation process can alter the feed in both chemical and microbiological terms. Preparing and administering feed mix twice a day reduces storage time, thus mitigating this fermentation risk.

In the same passage, to clarify the exact moment at which the prepared feed should be administered, rather than 'the feed must be administered immediately after preparation', the specification now states 'the feed must be administered as soon as it is prepared'. This change has no impact on the raw material (milk) used to make 'Parmigiano Reggiano' and consequently do not affect the cheese itself. It is therefore a minor amendment.

6. Updated product specification (only for PDO and PGI)

SINGLE DOCUMENT

'PARMIGIANO REGGIANO'

EU No: PDO-IT-02202 — 14.11.2016

PDO (X) PGI ()

1. **Name(s)**

'Parmigiano Reggiano'

2. **Member State or Third Country**

Italy

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*

'Parmigiano Reggiano' is a hard cheese made from raw cow's milk, which is partially skimmed by allowing the cream to rise to the surface. The cheese is scalded and slowly matured. The milk must not undergo any heat treatment and has to come from cows fed primarily on fodder obtained in the area of origin. The cheese must be matured for at least 12 months. 'Parmigiano Reggiano' can be sold whole, in portions or grated.

'Parmigiano Reggiano' has the following characteristics:

- The cheeses are cylindrical with a slightly convex or virtually straight heel and flat faces with a slightly raised edge.
- The flat faces have a diameter of 35 cm to 45 cm and the heel height is 20 cm to 26 cm.
- The minimum weight of each cheese is 30 kg.
- The outer rind is a natural straw colour.
- The rind is approximately 6 mm thick.
- The body of the cheese is between light straw-coloured and straw-coloured.
- The cheese's characteristic aroma and taste are fragrant, delicate and flavoursome without being pungent.
- The body of the cheese is fine-grained and flaky in texture.
- The minimum fat content in dry matter is 32 %.
- The cheese contains no additives.
- It has a cyclopropane fatty acid ratio of less than 22 mg per 100 g of fat (already accounting for uncertainty of measurement, gas chromatography-mass spectrometry (CG-MS) method).

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

The cows are to be fed primarily on fodder from the defined geographical area, specified by quantity and quality.

At least 75 % of fodder dry matter must be produced within the geographical area.

Feedstuffs may make up at most 50 % of the dry matter of the feed ration.

The use of silage of any kind is banned.

Cow's milk, salt, calf rennet.

The milk is from cows reared in the defined geographical area.

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

The farms that rear the dairy cows whose milk is to be processed into 'Parmigiano Reggiano' must be located within the defined geographical area.

The milk must be produced and processed within the defined geographical area. The milk from the evening and morning milkings is delivered to the dairy raw and unskimmed, observing the production specifications. The milk from the morning milking is placed in copper vats and mixed with the milk from the previous evening, partially skimmed by allowing the cream to rise to the surface. The fat-to-casein ratio of the milk in the heating vats, calculated as the weighted average of all batches in a given day's production, cannot exceed 1,1 + 12 %. The whey from the previous day's cheesemaking is added to the milk; the use of starter cultures is not permitted. Following coagulation, for which only calf rennet can be used, the curds are broken up and scalded. Once the cheese mass has sunk to bottom of the vat, it is set in moulds. Markings are then stamped onto the cheeses. After some days, the cheeses are soaked in brine and then matured for at least 12 months.

The minimum 12-month maturing period must take place in the defined geographical area.

After the minimum maturing period, a quality inspection is performed to check compliance with the production specifications.

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

'Parmigiano Reggiano' can be sold whole, in portions or grated.

In the interests of consumer protection, in order to guarantee the authenticity of pre-packaged, grated or portioned 'Parmigiano Reggiano' placed on the market, grating, portioning and subsequent packaging must take place in the defined geographical area. This is necessary because the markings that identify a whole cheese as 'Parmigiano Reggiano' are lost or are not visible on grated cheese or portions, so the origin of the pre-packaged product has to be guaranteed. This is also necessary because the cheese needs to be packaged quickly after portioning and using procedures that prevent it from becoming dehydrated or oxidised, or from losing its original 'Parmigiano Reggiano' organoleptic characteristics. Cutting into a wheel of cheese deprives the cheese of the natural protection afforded by the rind, which — itself being highly dehydrated — insulates the cheese very well against the surrounding environment.

Only the whole cheese bearing the protected designation of origin 'Parmigiano Reggiano' may be grated. It must be packaged immediately after grating and may not be subject to any processing or have any substance added to it that could affect how long the cheese keeps for or its original organoleptic characteristics.

'Parmigiano Reggiano' portions may be packaged at the same business premises on which they are cut.

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

The identity markings found on each 'Parmigiano Reggiano' cheese are the words 'Parmigiano-Reggiano' in pin-dot writing, together with the registration number of the dairy that produced it and the year and month of production, which are applied to the surface of the heel using stencils (marking strips). The cheeses also bear an oval stamp with the words 'Parmigiano Reggiano Consorzio Tutela', a casein nameplate with the codes identifying the cheese, and, as the case may be, the markings identifying a second-class cheese.

Pre-packaged, grated and portioned 'Parmigiano Reggiano' cheese placed on the market is identified by a logo depicting a segment and wheel of 'Parmigiano Reggiano' cheese next to a knife, with the words 'PARMIGIANO REGGIANO' appearing below. This marking, which is a mandatory component of the label, must be displayed in accordance with the technical specifications defined by the Consortium in the relevant agreement.

So that consumers can correctly identify its age, all pre-packaged 'Parmigiano Reggiano' portions of more than 15 g placed on the market must be labelled with minimum maturity.

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

The defined geographical area comprises the part of the province of Bologna to the left of the River Reno, the part of the province of Mantua to the right of the River Po, and the provinces of Modena, Parma and Reggio Emilia.

5. Link with the geographical area

Among the most important natural factors are the characteristics of the soil found within the defined geographical area — which extends from the Apennine ridge to the Po — coupled with climate conditions that directly influence both the composition of the natural flora and the fermentation of the cheese itself. With regard to human factors, as well as the historical importance of the cheese to the local economy, it should be noted that the complex operations performed on 'Parmigiano Reggiano' cheese have been developed over centuries of traditional cheesemaking practices within the production area, handed down from generation to generation with respect for authentic and unvarying local practices.

A fine-grained and flaky structure, a fragrant aroma, a delicate taste — flavoursome without being pungent — and high solubility and digestibility are distinguishing features of 'Parmigiano Reggiano' cheese.

These features reflect the unique qualities of the milk used for cheesemaking — raw milk is processed daily in copper vats and coagulated using calf rennet with a high rennin content — and the criteria used to select it, as well as the practice of soaking the cheeses in saturated brine and the extended maturation period.

The specific physical, chemical and microbiological properties of the milk that guarantee the specific characteristics and quality of 'Parmigiano Reggiano' cheese are basically the result of the diet fed to the dairy cows, based on fodder from the area of origin and with a strict ban on the use of silage of any kind. The minimum twelve-month maturing period, which — given the specific climate conditions present — must take place within the defined geographical area, is a necessary stage to bring about the specific enzyme processes through which the product obtained by processing milk can take on the characteristics that are unique to 'Parmigiano Reggiano'.

Reference to publication of the product specification

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

The consolidated specification text can be found at:

<http://www.politicheagricole.it/flex/cm/pages/ServeBLOB.php/L/IT/IDPagina/3335>

Alternatively:

by going directly to the homepage of the Ministry of Agricultural, Food and Forestry Policy (www.politicheagricole.it) and clicking on 'Qualità' (at the top right-hand side of the screen), then on 'Prodotti DOP, IGP e STG' (on the left-hand side of the screen), and finally by clicking on 'Disciplinari di produzione all'esame dell'UE'.

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