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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

(C/2023/1382)

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

‘Wędzone jabłko sechłońskie’

EU No: PGI-PL-02896 – 16.1.2023

PDO () PGI (X)

1. Name of PGI

‘Wędzone jabłko sechłońskie’

2. Member State or Third Country

Poland

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 name ‘wędzone jabłko sechłońskie’ derives from the name of a village, Sechna, located in the municipality of Laskowa, and is traditionally used throughout the geographical area of production.

This name is used to market apple slices that have been dried and smoked; they have a wrinkled brown skin on the outside, and springy, light-brown flesh. The core may or may not have been removed. Slices of ‘wędzone jabłko sechłońskie’ may vary in size depending on the variety of apple that is dried. The diameter of the finished smoked apple slices depends on the growing season and the variety used in production; it usually ranges from 3 cm to 10 cm. The water content of the finished product is checked after drying; it ranges from 10 % to 23 %, depending, like the thickness of the slices, on the intended use of the product. A quantity of 5-8 kg of fresh apples yields 1 kg of dried fruit. The taste of ‘wędzone jabłko sechłońskie’ is slightly sweet, with the perceptible taste and aroma of smoke from the wood of deciduous trees.

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

The raw material for the production of ‘wędzone jabłko sechłońskie’ are apples of the following varieties: Antonówka, Boskoop, Szara Reneta [Reinette Grise], Wilhelm, Jonathan, Szampion, Jonagold, Idared and Idared derivatives.

The raw material used in production may come from outside the area defined in point 4.

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

The drying-houses must be located in the area referred to in point 4 and all stages in the production of ‘wędzone jabłko sechłońskie’ must take place in that area:

— sorting of the raw material;

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 343, 14.12.2012, p. 1.

- slicing and placing of the fruit in drying-houses;
- smoking and drying.

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

All operations throughout the entire production process for 'wędzone jabłko sechłońskie' must be done by hand, except for the slicing of the apples and any removal of cores, which are done mechanically.

Packaging of the product must take place within the geographical area specified in point 4. The packaging process is associated with traditional practice and is necessary to guarantee a high-quality product (ensuring protection against factors including physical and microbiological contamination, increased moisture content and losses caused by pests), to facilitate transport and handling, and to prevent any mixing of 'wędzone jabłko sechłońskie' with similar products. The purpose is also to safeguard the product's reputation.

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**

The production area of 'wędzone jabłko sechłońskie' is located in Małopolskie Province, in the following municipalities: Laskowa, Iwkowa, Łososina Dolna and Żegocina.

5. **Link with the geographical area**

The link between 'wędzone jabłko sechłońskie' and the geographical area in which it is produced is based on characteristic features derived from the centuries-old tradition of producing the product and the specific skills of local producers.

A characteristic feature of the region is the cultivation of apple and plum trees and the production of the fruit from these trees for use in 'wędzone jabłko sechłońskie'. Even today the word used here for 'drying' is the dialect word 'sechnie' instead of the standard Polish 'suszenie'. The particular climatic and soil conditions in Sechna favoured the cultivation of fruit trees. Excess fruit was preserved using a specific drying and smoking method developed in the area. Fruit could be preserved in this form for a whole year.

The entire area referred to in point 4 is characterised by steeply-inclined slopes and by a very delicate climate with great variations in altitude. The best conditions for growing apple trees are found on hillsides. The Beskid Wyspowy [Island Beskid] mountains are characterised by slopes that receive a lot of sunshine and a delicate warm and damp climate that favours the development of fruit farming. The 'wędzone jabłko sechłońskie' is made within this area. The area is located where four districts meet: those of Limanowa, Bochnia and Nowy Sącz. There are natural connections among the population due to transport and commercial infrastructure, and the area forms a cultural community. The area in question includes the following municipalities: Laskowa, Iwkowa, Łososina Dolna and Żegocina, which together cover an area of 239,55 km². The area is bounded in the south by the Łososina range of hills, with the highest peaks in the area being Jaworz and Sałasz.

The name 'wędzone jabłko sechłońskie' derives mainly from the local word to describe men from the village of Sechna: 'sechlok'. When they married women living in other villages, they brought their unusual method of producing 'wędzone jabłko sechłońskie' with them and were most often called a 'sechlok' by their new neighbours. Mastering the complex production method required them to have known it from early childhood and the skill is one that is passed on from father to son. It is not a skill that can be gained or acquired over a short period of time. Over the centuries the people of Sechna have refined their ability to dry various fruits, in particular plums. Sliced apples turned out to be an excellent raw material for the traditional drying process, and 'wędzone jabłko sechłońskie' began to be produced from them. The locals developed techniques to build their own unusual drying-houses and to carry out the drying process itself. The name of the village of Sechna (which shares a linguistic root with the Polish word for 'dry') comes from the unusual natural conditions that are conducive to drying. The skills and centuries-old experience of producers have given 'wędzone jabłko sechłońskie' a superb reputation.

The product owes its specificity to the method of production, comprising the design of the drying-houses and the drying method, neither of which is used in other regions. The method used is based on the skills of local producers, passed down from generation to generation.

The secret passed down from father to son from the 18th century was the design of the drying-house and the drying technique, unknown in other parts of the country. This type of drying-house, which permits simultaneous drying and smoking, does not occur in neighbouring areas and has an impact on the particular taste, and thus the reputation, of 'wędzone jabłko sechłońskie'. The drying-houses consist of a brick foundation within which are found a burner and a covered chamber containing a grate made from wooden sticks. The design of the drying-house is adapted to the steep slopes that make up the terrain in the area. The brick foundation of the drying-house, on which an oven containing a burner is placed, is generally rectangular in shape and is made of non-combustible material. In the past, stone was used to make the foundations of the drying-house. These days other materials, such as hollow bricks and poured-concrete blocks, are more commonly used.

When the oven described above is lit, it gives off heat and smoke which, through a rotary motion, dries the apple slices placed in the chambers above it. The drying-houses used to produce 'wędzone jabłko sechłońskie' were most often home-made and built from readily accessible materials – most often from wood. It is these very drying-houses that have become a permanent feature of the landscape of the region, and only in such drying-houses can 'wędzone jabłko sechłońskie' be made.

The foundation is closely connected to the upper part of the drying-house (comprising the chamber with the grate), in which is placed a grate made from wooden sticks laid crosswise, and on which the fruit to be dried is arranged.

The upper part of the drying-house consists of a chamber built from wooden beams, concrete, or hollow bricks. The average size of the chamber is about 2,5 to 3,5 metres long. In the centre of the chamber there is a divider (partition) which splits the chamber into two parts. The lower part of the chamber – the grate – is created by laying alongside each other wooden sticks of a rectangular section of approximately 3 by 4 centimetres. These days the sticks are made from the wood of coniferous trees. The sticks must be made from good quality wood as they are used for between 10 and 20 years, depending on the frequency and intensity of drying.

The sticks are placed in a single layer. When the sticks are positioned correctly at an appropriate height above the burner (usually around 180 cm), the circulation of smoke and warm air is self-sustaining.

The smoking and drying of apples in traditional Sechna drying-houses is done with hot smoke, which distinguishes 'wędzone jabłko sechłońskie' from apples dried with hot air. Smoking and drying with smoke is only possible thanks to the special design of the drying-houses, adapted to the features of the terrain. The natural movement of air upwards along the slope to the top makes it possible for air to be drawn in through the oven flue, which is always positioned on the side closest to the slope. This phenomenon is particularly pronounced in the Island Beskid range, within which the geographical area defined in point 4 is located.

When smoked in this way the apple slices lose some of the moisture in their flesh and also become saturated with smoke.

The reduction in moisture content in the flesh during smoking, and the antiseptic action of the smoke, hinder the development of putrefactive bacteria, thus extending the life of the product.

The smoke gives the fruit a unique taste and aroma of smoking from the wood of deciduous trees and a light brown colour, which distinguishes 'wędzone jabłko sechłońskie' from other products in the same category.

Many source materials relating to the production area for 'wędzone jabłko sechłońskie' contain references to the cultivation of apples, plums and pear trees and to the tradition of drying them. These include J. Ligeza's study *Ujanowice. Wieś powiatu limanowskiego* ['Ujanowice: a village in Limanowa District'] of 1928 and the book *Żmija* ['Żmija village'] by Franciszek Bujak in 1903. This provides evidence that the fruit-farming industry was already developed at that time.

The source materials contain information on the economic importance of dried apples, pears and plums in terms of specific amounts; a *korzec* [a unit of measurement equivalent to approximately 98 kg or 120 litres] of dried plums cost between 10 and 20 krone [the currency of the time], while a *korzec* of dried pears and apples cost between 6 and 10 krone.

Polish cuisine and the position that smoked apples occupy within it are testament to the ancient tradition of drying. Examples include dried fruit soup and the tradition of enhancing the taste of dishes made from peas and groats with 'wędzone jabłko sechłońskie'. Many poems and songs about the drying tradition have been preserved in the historical literature. For centuries fruit was an important food for the population. In order to extend the period in which it remained edible, it was processed in different ways, including by drying it in a traditional manner with smoke.

In a study entitled *Od Ujanowic do Laskowej – przeszłość i współczesność* ['From Ujanowice to Laskowa – Past and Present'], Ms Małgorzata Sromek, when describing the old way of life of the local inhabitants, quotes from a folk verse (*Sechna jesienią* ['Sechna autumn'] by T. Grzegorzek) whose final stanza mentions the fruit that are dried in the area: apple, plum and pear.

Further evidence of the reputation of 'wędzone jabłko sechłońskie' comes from the fact that information about it can be found in a number of regional cookery books, such as the 2004 book *Regionalna książka kucharska lachów i górali* ['Regional cookbook for Lachs and Gorals'], which contains a recipe for smoked-apple compote.

Smoked fruit also features in recipes in the 2008 book *Małopolska – palce lizać* ['Finger-licking Małopolska'] and the 2011 book *Smaki regionów* ['Regional Flavours'].

And in the 2014 cookbook *Suska sechłońska w kuchni polskiej* ['Suska sechłońska in Polish Cuisine'] there are several recipes that use 'wędzone jabłko sechłońskie'. These days many well-known and popular chefs create signature recipes that include smoked apple, which lends a specific taste to dishes (dried fruit compote) and which is presented as a remarkable achievement by the inhabitants of the region; these chefs include Karol Okrasa, who in his programme *Okrasa łamie przepisy* ['Okrasa Breaks the Rules/Recipes'] said that, of all the world's people, only we, the Poles, have thought up the idea of smoking fruit, and that particular attention should be given to encouraging and protecting it. Mikołaj Rey, in his programme *Podróże kulinarne Mikołaja Reya* ['The Culinary Travels of Mikołaj Rey'] also presented the Sechna tradition of drying as quite extraordinary, and the taste as being unique. Here a mention should also be made of Polywka, a traditional product also from the region in question and which includes plums, pears and slices of apple dried with smoke in traditional drying-houses.

More evidence of the tradition and continuity of the drying of apples in the area comes from the many documents containing information that drying-houses were found in the area and that fruit such as apples, pears and plums were dried and smoked in them. One document preserved from 1984 contains a request from a farmer in Sechna, addressed to the 'Przedsiębiorstwo Komunikacji Samochodowej w Nowym Sączu' ['Nowy Sącz Motor Transport Company'], for a vehicle to be made available for the transport of dried fruit. The information in the request concerning the size of the crop is certified as correct by the Laskowa Municipal Administration. Many documents confirming tests on dried apple have also been preserved, for instance from the Limanowa Sanitary and Epidemiological Field Station in 1996 and 1992. These documents bear the control reference numbers 1946, 1947, 1948, 2013, 2014 and 2015, which demonstrates that a large number of such tests were undertaken. Also preserved are architectural plans from 1980 for the construction of a dual-chamber drying-house in the village of Kobyłczyna in the municipality of Laskowa. Another confirmation of the tradition of drying apples in this area is a receipt issued to a farmer from the 'Kwiaty, Warzywa, Owoce' [Flowers, Vegetables and Fruit] market garden cooperative for the sale of smoked apples, pears and plums.

'Wędzone jabłko sechłońskie' has consistently good standing among consumers because of the method, passed from generation to generation, of smoking in special drying-houses, which gives the fruit a unique aroma and taste. The characteristic taste of smoky notes finds favour not only among those living in the area where it is produced, but across the whole of Poland. 'Wędzone jabłko sechłońskie' is also exported, principally to locations where Poles have emigrated and where there are buyers. Consumers seek out 'wędzone jabłko sechłońskie' and are willing to pay a higher price for the product.

The reputation of 'wędzone jabłko sechłońskie' has been shaped by the retention of a traditional, local production method. This production method is based on the accumulation of experience and skills developed over decades by people in the four municipalities mentioned in point 4. Over time producers have built special drying-houses to their own design to produce products of high quality and unparalleled taste. These drying-houses perfectly match the landscape of the region and have become an integral part of it.

Reference to publication of the specification

<https://www.gov.pl/web/rolnictwo/wnioski-przekazane-komisji-europejskiej>
