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(Announcements)

OTHER ACTS

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Publication of an approved standard amendment to a product specification of a protected designation of origin or protected geographical indications in the sector of agricultural products and foodstuffs, as referred to in Article 6b(2) and (3) of Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No 664/2014

(2022/C 407/06)

This communication is published in accordance with Article 6b(5) of Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No 664/2014 ⁽¹⁾.

Communicating the approval of a standard amendment to the product specification of a protected designation of origin or protected geographical indication originating in a Member State

(Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012)**‘Χαλλούμι / Halloumi / Hellim’****EU No: PDO-CY-01243-AM01 – 1.8.2022****PDO (X) PGI ()****1. Name of product**

‘Χαλλούμι / Halloumi / Hellim’

2. Member State to which the geographical area belongs

Cyprus

3. Member State authority communicating the standard amendment

Department of Agriculture – Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and the Environment

4. Description of the approved amendment(s)

In accordance with the Single Document and the Specification, and with the scientific data supporting them, the approved amendments affect neither the physical, chemical and/or organoleptic characteristics of the product nor its link with the geographical area. This is also evidenced by the fact that the characteristics of the product, which are described in the Single Document and in the Specification and which are essentially attributable to the characteristics of the goat and sheep's milk, are associated with and linked to the type of milk, i.e. goat and sheep's milk, not to the milk of specific breeds. Moreover, some of the characteristics of the goat and sheep's milk which, as described in the Single Document and in the Specification, affect the characteristics of Χαλλούμι (Halloumi) / Hellim, result from the consumption of the local flora, either fresh or dried. However, there is no indication in the Specification or the Single

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 179, 19.6.2014, p. 17.

Document, or any scientific data, linking the characteristics of Χαλλούμι (Halloumi) / Hellim to a particular type of feed and/or to a percentage of a given feed and/or to a specific breed combination (sheep and goats) with a specific type and percentage of feed. Therefore, any exclusions of breeds and percentage limits on feed other than those provided for in the legislation (Regulation (EU) No 664/2014) complicate the application of PDO Χαλλούμι (Halloumi) / Hellim in practice and have no positive impact whatsoever on the quality of the product and/or on the strengthening of the link with the defined area.

Furthermore, it is important to note that the approved amendments also simplify the procedure for verifying compliance with the specification for PDO Χαλλούμι (Halloumi) / Hellim, since they allow for better tracing.

In the Single Document, in Section 3.3 'Feed and raw materials', the second paragraph under the heading 'Raw materials', which refers to breeds of productive animals whose milk is used in the production of Χαλλούμι (Halloumi) / Hellim, is amended as follows:

'The sheep and goat's milk comes from local and other breeds, including their crosses, that are reared within the defined geographical area.'

In addition, in Section 3.3 'Feed and raw materials' of the Single Document, the second paragraph under the heading 'Feed' is amended as follows:

'The sheep and goat's milk comes from local and other breeds, including their crosses, that graze throughout the year, provided weather conditions permit. All the coarse fodder in the sheep and goats' diet is locally produced (green forage, hay, silage, straw/stubble and grazing on wild plants). As regards feed supplements, cereals, including barley and maize, protein feed such as husked, partly decorticated soybean meal, products and by-products of various raw materials such as wheat bran, and inorganic substances, vitamins and micronutrients may be used.'

Increased demand for milk has led farmers to seek new, more productive breeds with better quality milk. This, in effect, complicates the procedure for inspecting and tracing the milk intended for the production of Χαλλούμι (Halloumi) / Hellim. Moreover, as regards feed supplements, due to the tendency to include other cereals and protein feed, setting a specific percentage for barley and bran is a hindering factor that significantly hampers the inspection procedure.

Therefore, in order to simplify and facilitate inspections and ensure full compliance with the specification, the approved amendments will be applied.

Product description

The name 'Halloumi' will be used throughout the text, representing the names indicated above, i.e.:

'Χαλλούμι' (Halloumi) / 'Hellim'

There are two types of Halloumi – fresh and mature.

Fresh Halloumi is made from curds produced by curdling milk with rennet. It is cooked and formed into its characteristic shape. It is semi-hard and elastic, folded (into a rectangular or semi-circular shape), white to light-yellowish in colour, has a close texture and is easily sliced, with a characteristic smell and taste. It smells strongly of milk/whey and has an aroma and taste of mint, a barnyard smell and a pungent, salty taste. The maximum moisture content is 46 %, the minimum fat content is 43 % (in dry weight) and the maximum salt content is 3 %.

Mature Halloumi is made from curds produced by curdling milk with rennet. It is cooked and formed into its characteristic shape and left to mature in salted whey for at least 40 days. It is semi-hard to hard, less elastic, folded (into a rectangular or semi-circular shape), white to yellowish in colour, has a close texture and is easily sliced, with a characteristic smell and taste. It smells strongly of milk/whey and has an aroma and taste of mint, a barnyard smell and a pungent, salty taste; it is slightly bitter and very salty. The maximum moisture content is 37 %, the minimum fat content is 40 % (in dry weight), the maximum salt content is 6 % and the acidity is 1,2 % (expressed as lactic acid in dry weight).

Halloumi cheeses weigh from 150 to 350 grams.

SINGLE DOCUMENT

‘Χαλλούμι / Halloumi / Hellim’

EU No: PDO-CY-01243-AM01 – 1.8.2022

PDO (X) PGI ()

1. Name(s) [of PDO or PGI]

‘Χαλλούμι / Halloumi / Hellim’

2. Member State or Third Country

Cyprus

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

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Mature Halloumi is made from curds produced by curdling milk with rennet. It is cooked and formed into its characteristic shape and left to mature in salted whey for at least 40 days. It is semi-hard to hard, less elastic, folded (into a rectangular or semi-circular shape), white to yellowish in colour, has a close texture and is easily sliced, with a characteristic smell and taste. It smells strongly of milk/whey and has an aroma and taste of mint, a barnyard smell and a pungent, salty taste; it is slightly bitter and very salty. The maximum moisture content is 37 %, the minimum fat content is 40 % (in dry weight), the maximum salt content is 6 % and the acidity is 1,2 % (expressed as lactic acid in dry weight).

Halloumi cheeses weigh from 150 to 350 grams.

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

Regarding the milk used to make Halloumi, the following applies, without prejudice to the provisions of Regulation (EU) No 664/2014:

The sheep and goat’s milk comes from local and other breeds, including their crosses, that graze throughout the year, provided weather conditions permit. All the coarse fodder in the sheep and goats’ diet is locally produced (green forage, hay, silage, straw/stubble and grazing on wild plants). As regards feed supplements, cereals, including barley and maize, protein feed such as husked, partly decorticated soybean meal, products and by-products of various raw materials such as wheat bran, and inorganic substances, vitamins and micronutrients may be used.

The cow’s milk comes from black and white cows that are housed in sheds and fed on forage, hay, silage and straw that are produced in Cyprus, mainly from native forage plants, and on feed supplements. Specifically, the cows’ diet consists of locally produced forage (35-40 %) (green forage plants, hay, silage and straw/stubble). The remaining 60-65 % of their diet consists of feed supplements containing mainly barley, maize, soya and bran. As regards the feed supplements, 20 % of the barley and the bran is produced locally, while the soya and maize are imported.

Milk (fresh sheep or goat's milk or a mixture thereof, with or without cow's milk added), rennet (but not pig rennet), fresh or dried Cypriot mint leaves (*Mentha viridis*) and salt. The proportion of sheep or goat's milk or the mixture thereof must always be greater than the proportion of cow's milk. In other words, when cow's milk is used in addition to sheep or goat's milk or a mixture thereof, the proportion of cow's milk in the Halloumi must not be greater than the proportion of sheep or goat's milk or the mixture thereof. The milk used for making Halloumi is Cypriot full-fat milk. The milk must be pasteurised or have been heated to a temperature above 65 °C. It must not be condensed milk or contain any of the following: milk powder, condensed milk, casein salts, colourings, preservatives or other additives. It must not contain antibiotics, pesticides or other harmful substances.

The sheep and goat's milk comes from local and other breeds, including their crosses, that are reared within the defined geographical area.

The cow's milk comes from black and white cows that were gradually introduced in Cyprus, starting at the beginning of the 20th century, and are now very well adapted to local conditions.

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

The sheep, goat and cow's milk that is the raw material for the production of 'Halloumi' cheese is produced within the defined geographical area. Halloumi itself is also produced within the defined geographical area.

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

'Halloumi' cheese must be packaged within the defined geographical area for the following reasons: (a) immediately after it has been produced, Halloumi must be packaged to prevent further ripening, (b) the Halloumi production process (production-packaging) cannot be interrupted (continuous production), (c) to ensure traceability, the product must be packaged by the producer and labelled accordingly, (d) to prevent any cheese produced outside Cypriot territory being marketed as PDO Halloumi, so as to guarantee the quality and origin of the product and ensure that the requisite controls can be carried out.

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

Regarding the composition of the milk used to produce 'Halloumi', in cases where a mixture of milks is used, the different types of milk must be mentioned on the label, in decreasing order of percentage.

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

The administrative boundaries of the districts of Nicosia, Limassol, Larnaca, Famagusta, Paphos and Kyrenia.

5. **Link with the geographical area**

Specificity of the geographical area

Natural factors: Cyprus has a Mediterranean climate characterised by hot, dry summers and mild, wet winters. The island's terrain also plays a very important role: the mountains receive a relatively high amount of rainfall and affect the hydrology and environment of the lower lying areas, as the numerous streams are fed with water from springs for several months after the rains have stopped. In relation to its size Cyprus has one of the richest floras in the Mediterranean, owing to its geological structure, climate, geographical position, the surrounding sea and the land configuration (Tsintidis et al., 2002). There are 1 908 different species of plant, 140 of which are endemic, i.e. they are found only in Cyprus (Department of Forests, 2004). Lastly, the local breeds of dairy animals in Cyprus include the local fat-tailed sheep, which is well adapted to the dry climate and high temperatures of the area, and the local Machaira and Pissouri goats. The Chios sheep and the Damascus goat (introduced in the 1950s and 1930s respectively) are also local breed types, as their morphological and production characteristics have diverged from those of the populations of origin after a long-standing national breeding programme.

Human factors: historical references show that Halloumi production in Cyprus was known from the most ancient times. Halloumi is mentioned as 'calumi' in a codex containing five manuscripts on the history of Cyprus that is kept in the library of the Correr Museum in Venice. Dating back to 1554, this is the oldest written reference to Halloumi that has been found up to now. There are also later references to Halloumi, inter alia by Archimandrite Kyprianos in 1788.

The importance of Halloumi in the life of the local people can be clearly seen through art (poetry, literature) and the place it occupied in agricultural shows (Lyssi, 1939). The list of classes and cash prizes and the conditions for entry for the Lyssi Agricultural Show, which was published in both Greek and Turkish, includes the products that can be entered in the competition. The Turkish name for 'Halloumi' is 'Hellim'. Turkish Cypriot Halloumi producers use both names for our traditional product or just the name 'Hellim'. There is ample evidence that the two names 'Halloumi' and 'Hellim' refer to the same traditional Cypriot product, for which both names are used (Halkin Sesi newspaper, 1959 and 1962 and product packaging for export bearing both names).

The close link between the product and the island's inhabitants is also evident from the fact that today 'Halloumas', 'Hallouma', 'Halloumakis' and 'Halloumis' are common Cypriot surnames.

From ancient times Halloumi was an important element in the Cypriot diet (Bevan, 1919; Pitcairn, 1934; Zigouris, 1952) and met the needs of Cypriot families all year round. Halloumi was 'the famous Cypriot cheese, produced in a special way', one of the most common accompaniments to bread in every Cypriot household, essential to every rural family (Xioutas, 2001). As well as being consumed locally, from ancient times Halloumi was exported to various countries (Archimandrite Kyprianos, 1788), including Egypt, Syria, Greece, Turkey, Palestine, France, Sudan, the United Kingdom, America, Australia and China (Dawe, 1928).

The production process is unique, in particular the stages of cooking the product at a high temperature for a specific length of time, the folding and the addition of Cypriot mint. Cooking the curds is very important since, according to a relevant study, it enhances the product's organoleptic qualities. Specifically, cooking the curds at a high temperature produces high levels of certain basic chemical compounds that help determine the taste of Halloumi. Some of these compounds are lactones, such as delta-dodecalactone (characterised by a fruity flavour) and delta-decalactone (characterised by a creamy flavour), whereas some are methyl ketones, which are characterised by a milk-like flavour (P. Papademas, 2000).

The typical folding of the curds, as part of the traditional processing, sets Halloumi apart from all other cheeses. The practice of folding came into use because, traditionally, this made it easier to put the cheeses into the containers where they were kept in whey. Also, the mint leaves are placed between the curd layers (during the folding process) so that they are held in place, allowing the mint to give its characteristic aroma to the final product. The use of mint (*Mentha viridis*) at the folding stage gives the final product its characteristic aroma thanks to the presence of the terpenes pulegone ('mint terpene') and carvone (Papademas and Robinson, 1998). It is the local producers who have the knowledge of this production process.

Specificity of the product

The specific characteristics of the product include:

- (a) the property that it does not spread or melt at high temperatures (it can be eaten not only as it is but also fried, grilled, etc.);
- (b) the heat treatment of the curds in whey at a temperature of over 90 °C for at least 30 minutes, which is a unique feature of the production process and contributes to the specific organoleptic characteristics of the product;
- (c) the folding that gives it its characteristic shape;
- (d) its organoleptic characteristics (with a characteristic smell and taste – it smells strongly of milk/whey and has an aroma and taste of mint, a barnyard smell and a pungent, salty taste) due mainly to the sheep and goat's milk, which is affected by the animals' diet, the mint that is added during the production process and the volatile compounds that are formed during the heat treatment of the curds in whey; and

- (e) its traditional character, derived from the fact that it has been made in Cyprus since ancient times according to the traditional method handed down from one generation to the next, and it is the local producers who have the knowledge of this process today.

Causal link between the geographical area and the quality or characteristics of the product (for PDO) or a given quality, the reputation or other characteristics of the product (for PGI)

The link between Halloumi and the geographical environment resides in the specificity of the island's Mediterranean climate. The local vegetation consumed by the dairy animals passes from the stage of green pasture to semi-dry and finally dry fodder, following the characteristic phases of the local microclimate. Some of these plants are endemic. This local Cypriot vegetation, consumed by the animals either fresh or dried, has a crucial effect on the quality of the milk and consequently the specific characteristics of the cheese (Papademas, 2000). The presence of the bacillus *Lactobacillus cypricasei* (lactobacillus from Cypriot cheese), which has been isolated only from Cypriot Halloumi, testifies to the link between the island's microflora and the product (Lawson et al., 2001). Also, the addition of Cypriot mint further contributes to the product's characteristic flavour. Other factors affecting the product's organoleptic characteristics, especially its taste and smell, are the type of milk used, as sheep and goat's milk contain specific low molecular weight fatty acids, and the volatile compounds formed during the production process.

Regarding the link between human factors and the product, Halloumi is considered traditional to Cyprus, since, as described in point 5.1, it has played a very important role in the life and diet of the island's inhabitants, both Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots, since ancient times and knowledge of the production process has been handed down from one generation to the next. Both its characteristic folded shape and its specific property of not melting at high temperatures are due to this traditional production process that has been passed down through the generations.

Reference to publication of the product specification

<http://www.moa.gov.cy/moa/da/da.nsf/All/82B33F7D83ABF5A8C225879C00346BA5?OpenDocument>
