

OTHER ACTS

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Publication of an amendment application pursuant to Article 50(2)(a) of Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council on quality schemes for agricultural products and foodstuffs

(2015/C 74/10)

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⁾.

AMENDMENT APPLICATION

COUNCIL REGULATION (EC) No 510/2006**on the protection of geographical indications and designations of origin for agricultural products and foodstuffs ⁽²⁾****AMENDMENT APPLICATION IN ACCORDANCE WITH ARTICLE 9****'ABONDANCE'****EC No: FR-PDO-0117-01088 – 7.12.2012****PGI () PDO (X)****1. Sections of the specification affected by the amendments**

- Name of product
- Description of product
- Geographical area
- Proof of origin
- Method of production
- Link
- Labelling
- National requirements
- Other [to be specified] packaging

2. Type of amendments

- Amendment to Single Document or Summary Sheet
- Amendment to Specification of registered PDO or PGI for which neither the Single Document nor the Summary Sheet has been published
- Amendment to Specification that requires no amendment to the published Single Document (Article 9(3) of Regulation (EC) No 510/2006)
- Temporary amendment to the product specification resulting from the adoption of obligatory sanitary or phytosanitary measures by the public authorities (Article 9(4) of Regulation (EC) No 510/2006)

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 343, 14.12.2012, p. 1.

⁽²⁾ OJ L 93, 31.3.2006, p. 12. Replaced by Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012.

3. Amendments

3.1. Amendment to point (2), 'Description of product'

This amendment makes it clear that 'Abondance' is a pressed cheese, as this aspect had been omitted from the file sent when registering the PDO.

In order to bring all parts of the description of the cheese together in one place, the parts specifying that the cheese is made from raw, whole and renneted cow's milk, and the parts describing the rind, both of which previously formed part of the chapter entitled 'Method of production' (rough-textured appearance and golden yellow to brown in colour), have been moved to the chapter entitled 'Description of product'.

The overall shape of the cheese has also been specified (that of a flat cylindrical millstone).

The definition of the diameter of the cheese has been deleted, given that the shape of the cheese (that of a flat cylindrical millstone), the height of the round and its weight are sufficient to define the cheese's appearance.

The lower limit of the weight range of the cheese has been reduced from 7 to 6 kg to take better account of variability in the cheese's shape, which stems particularly from seasonal factors and the limited size of producers' herds on farms. This is also consistent with the increased minimum ripening period.

The description also states that the cheese may have a number of fine horizontal slit eyes as such slit eyes may be found in the course of organoleptic testing.

3.2. Amendment to point (4), 'Evidence that the product originates from the geographical area'

The text under the heading 'Evidence that the product originates from the geographical area' has been consolidated to bring together, in particular, the requirements relating to declaration and those on the keeping of registers for tracing the product and monitoring production conditions.

Moreover, this section has been extended and supplemented to add several provisions on registers and declarative documents enabling the cheeses' traceability to be guaranteed.

Information on identifying the cheeses, which previously formed part of the chapter on 'Labelling', has been moved to the chapter entitled 'Evidence that the product originates from the geographical area'.

The term 'casein plate' has been replaced by the term 'identification plate', thus permitting the labels to be made of various edible materials and not just casein.

The term 'blue colour' has been replaced by the colours 'red' and 'green'. These colours form part of a colour code and denote dairy-based or farm production respectively. In addition, the shape of the plates has been specified.

The plate must bear the term 'fermier' ('farm') for cheeses produced on a farm, and the month and day of production are given on the heel near the identification plate in numbers or letters made of casein or food-grade ink.

The amended description also specifies that the plates are 'made available to operators by the group of producers' and 'if authorisation is withdrawn, the manufacturer returns them to the group'. Every producer is a full member of the group, so the operator automatically receives as many identification marks as it requests.

3.3. Amendment to point (5) 'Description of product'

With regard to breeds, the name 'Tarine' has been replaced by 'Tarentaise', the official name. With regard to breeds, the name 'Tarine' has been replaced by 'Tarentaise', the official name. 'Tarine' is merely a local name for the Tarentaise breed.

The precise classification of the animals forming part of a dairy herd (lactating cows, dry cows, heifers), their mandatory registration in the État Civil bovin and clarification of the codes corresponding to authorised breeds is to make it easier to check that the requirement with regard to breeds on holdings is being met.

To strengthen the contribution of the historic Abondance breed which is associated with this cheese and is particularly well adapted to the topographical and climatic conditions of the geographical area, a minimum percentage of cattle of the Abondance breed has been stipulated. Since changes have to be made to the working arrangements on the farms and to ensure the proper management of the Abondance breed, which has traditionally been managed collectively, an adjustment period and implementing measures are needed to promote continued collective management. Hence the following paragraph has been added:

'All herds to which a declaration of identification for the "Abondance" designation of origin applied on 7 December 2012 must be made up of:

- at least 35 % of livestock of the Abondance breed until 31 December 2015,
- at least 45 % of livestock of the Abondance breed from 1 January 2016 onwards.

Should it not be possible to comply with this requirement, at least 45 % of the herd of each milk producer must be made up of animals of the Abondance breed from 1 January 2016 onwards.

The herd of each milk producer that has signed a declaration of identification for the "Abondance" designation of origin after 7 December 2012 must be made up of:

- at least 35 % of livestock of the Abondance breed until 31 December 2015,
- at least 45 % of livestock of the Abondance breed from 1 January 2016 onwards.'

To ensure traditional pasturing practices and maintain the link with the geographical area, it is specified that at least 50 % (gross weight) of the herd's basic ration must be made up of grass collected in the summer, and that this basic ration must consist primarily of hay which may be distributed without restrictions during the winter.

With a view to regulating the total amount of feed supplied from outside the geographical area, and given the considerable pressure on land resources, the share of total feed sourced from outside the geographical area is limited to 35 % of the dry matter consumed by the herd annually.

As excessive livestock density does not enable each cow to obtain enough fodder for its milk to express all its aromatic potential, the average annual livestock density per hectare of forage area on the holding is restricted to 1,4 livestock units per hectare of principal forage area.

The measures prohibiting the use of GMOs permit the link with the geographical area and traditional livestock feeding methods to be maintained.

A minimum annual grazing period of 150 days has been set for the dairy cows. A list of authorised feed has been added and the conditions for using and distributing some of this feed have been made explicit.

Provision has been made for bringing in dry fodder from outside the geographical area, but this is restricted to no more than 30 % of the herd's annual dry fodder requirement (gross weight), and is counted within the previously mentioned limit of 35 % of dry matter consumed by the herd annually.

To prevent the risk of contamination, particularly by butyric acid bacteria spores, and to promote rumination, 'Any addition of mixtures of supplementary feed to the dairy herd's chopped forage is prohibited'.

The traditional practice of watering the herd with whey from the holding is regulated in order to reduce the potential risk of contamination: 'Watering the herd with whey from the holding and from a single process is permitted. This whey cannot be mixed with whey produced in another process and must be consumed within 24 hours.'

A list of authorised supplementary feedingstuffs has been added and the amount that can be distributed is restricted to 1 800 kg per dairy cow per annum, and to 500 kg/livestock unit of heifers per annum. This is to regulate both the size and nature of the contribution of supplementary feedingstuffs, and to make them easier to check.

The conditions under which fertiliser is applied have been defined, because restricting the use of organic fertiliser helps restrict the amount that can be applied and therefore helps preserve the characteristics of the soil and maintain the diversity of the natural flora, enabling the link with the geographical area to be maintained. Furthermore, the requirements relating to inputs of non-agricultural origin help prevent the risk of contamination from polluting substances: 'Only the following organic fertilisers are authorised:

- organic agricultural fertilisers from the geographical area of production of the "Abondance" designation of origin: compost, manure, slurry or liquid manure (of agricultural origin) and effluent from the cheese-making plant,
- organic fertilisers of non-agricultural origin, such as sewage sludge (or by-products) and green waste.

Each application of fertiliser must be followed by batch-wise analytical monitoring for pathogens, heavy metals and organic trace compounds covered by legislation.

Fertiliser may be applied on areas of the holding, but must be worked into the soil immediately, and current regulations laying down certain restrictions (dates, protected areas) and amounts must be complied with.'

Milking conditions have been defined: a dry period between two calvings of at least 45 days, milking twice in 24 hours with an interval between each milking of at least 8 hours, udders pre-soaked only in the event of contamination by staphylococci. These measures permit the preservation of practices which combine animal welfare with the production high-quality milk, because they have a favourable impact on the natural microflora of the milk.

The conditions under which milk is stored after milking and the time limits for using it in further production processes have been defined to preserve the inherent characteristics of the milk which are conducive to producing high-quality cheese:

- the milk is stored and matured on the farm at temperatures of between 4 and 14 °C,
- for dairy-based production, the milk collected from the two milkings must be renneted before midday on the day following the earliest of the two milkings. If, when milk production is completed, the volume of milk remaining in the milk tank is less than half the volume of the production vat, use of the milk may be deferred until the next round of production. In the case of farm-based production, the milk must be renneted within 14 hours of completing the earliest milking.

To make checking easier, if the cheese-making plant is located in a dairy manufacturing plant, the milk for the production of 'Abondance' is collected and stored separately from the rest of the milk. The milk transfer and storage facilities must be clearly separated and, if the milk is transported by a truck with compartments, the pumping system must prevent any mixing of milk.

To make sure that raw milk is used, some dairy treatments are specified as prohibited: heat treatment of milk at a temperature of more than 40 °C, bactofugation, ultrafiltration, microfiltration or any other treatment having equivalent effect. With the exception of cheese-making cauldrons, possession of any apparatus or installation enabling the above treatments to be carried out is also prohibited in the rooms where 'Abondance' is manufactured. The milk may only be heated once, and only before renneting, to a temperature of between 30 and 35 °C.

To ensure that cheeses with the protected designation of origin 'Abondance' retain a diversity of tastes and aromas, this being one of the characteristics expected by consumers who know the product, it is explicitly stated that 'dairy-based' manufacturing plants may not produce more than 5 million kg of milk and farm-based manufacturing plants not more than 500 000 kg of milk annually.

To make sure that full-cream milk is utilised, the addition or removal of cream is prohibited.

Leavening agents are specified; this helps preserve the biodiversity of the cheese dairies' microflora: raw and full-cream milk may be supplemented with lactic starters derived from a culture obtained from a previous round of production or from commercial starters contained in a 'starter bank'.

The use of copper enables benefit to be derived from its capacity to better distribute heat around the vat and within the mass of liquid being processed. This characteristic is of particular significance when manufacturing pressed cooked or half-cooked cheeses. Therefore it is specified that the cheese is made in an open copper vat. Nevertheless, the stainless steel vats used for making 'Abondance' prior to 7 December 2012 may by way of derogation be used until 1 September 2017.

To prevent the use of unwanted additives, cheese and rind colouring agents are prohibited. Aside from dairy raw materials, salt, calf rennet and selected starter cultures are the only other ingredients, production aids or additives authorised. All other additives are prohibited.

The curd must be cut using a wire, bladed or fir-wood curd cutter to obtain pieces smaller than 1 cm³, and then heated gradually. The time from the beginning of cutting of the coagulum until the cheese is shaped, during which the mass is worked in the vat, may not be less than 40 minutes. These requirements make explicit and help preserve the traditional cheese-making expertise associated with 'Abondance' cheese.

Details of the hooping and bandaging phases are provided because these are of key importance for the cheese's subsequent development. An error made in the previous product specification with regard to the pressing time (which is actually at least 7 hours rather than around 20 hours) has been corrected. Furthermore, the evolution of the techniques has led to wood not being the only material used in pressing: 'The cheese is kept in a circular mould, with at least both faces covered by one or two pieces of plant-fibre or synthetic cloth, for at least 5 hours in order to give it its form and a rough-textured exterior. This enables surface microflora specific to the "Abondance" designation to implant themselves. The mould that is used is circular and 7 to 8,5 cm high. The difference in thickness between the central internal part of the cheese round, which is the thickest part of the cheese, and the edges, where the cheese is the least thick, may not be less than 1 cm. The circular mould is made of wood or synthetic material adapted for contact with food. The cheese must be pressed for at least 7 hours.'

The minimum ripening period has been extended from 90 to 100 days, enabling better expression of the organoleptic characteristics of the cheese, and the pre-ripening and ripening stages have been more clearly defined so as to specify and preserve the cheese-ripening expertise associated with the making of 'Abondance' cheese. This stage is crucial for bringing out the characteristics of 'Abondance': 'The pre-ripening period may not exceed 10 days from the date of manufacture. The temperature during the pre-ripening phase is between 7 and 16 °C. The cheeses are ripened on unplanned spruce boards, except when in transport. The cheeses are ripened in a cellar for at least 100 days, starting from the date on which they are renneted, at a temperature of between 10 and 13 °C and at 90 % humidity. The aim of the process is to obtain a smear-ripened and clean-looking rind, with a rough-textured appearance and a colour ranging from golden-yellow to brown. Changing cheese-making plants during ripening is permitted, on the condition that the ripening process is not halted for more than 12 hours. The cheese is rubbed with cheese smear or dry salt using a brush or piece of cloth. The frequency of turning over the cheeses depends on the appearance of the rind, the age of the cheeses and the particularities of the cellars used. The cheese must be rubbed and turned over at least three times every 10 days during the first month, and at least once every 10 days thereafter. After 100 days, the cheeses may either be wrapped in packaging which permits the properties of the product to be preserved and kept at a positive temperature of less than 10 °C, or left unpackaged on spruce boards, on the proviso that they are treated as specified in the previous paragraph. Ripening continues under the same conditions as before.'

It is explicitly stated that the cheeses must be individually wrapped to protect the cheese smear. This is done in order to better preserve the characteristics of 'Abondance'. However, this requirement may be waived if the cheeses are to be transferred to a cheese-cutting workshop, packaging plant or another ripening plant, on condition that the means of transportation permits changes to the rind to be avoided.

To uphold and more clearly define the traditional know-how associated with farm-based production of 'Abondance', the following are stated as special features of its production: 'Only holdings complying with the following conditions may use the words "fabrication fermière" ("farm produced") or "fromage fermier" ("farm cheese") or any other words on their labels implying that their product comes from a farm. Renneting is carried out within 14 hours of completion of the first milking. Each producer has at least one manufacturing plant; collective use of a plant is prohibited. During the manufacturing process, some operations are performed manually and may not be mechanised. These are:

- cutting of the coagulum by means of a wireframe or fir-wood curd knife,
- racking and shaping of the cheese, which must be done in line with trustworthy and uninterrupted local practice. Each cheese must be extracted from the vats used to produce the cheese using a piece of cloth and a rod, and placed directly within the hoop used for shaping. The maximum size of the vats is 1 500 litres. Bigger vats used for making "Abondance" prior to 7 December 2012 may by way of derogation be used until 1 September 2017,
- the cheese must be turned over at least once in the half-hour following placement in the mould and at least twice during the following 12 hours.'

3.4. Amendment to point (8) 'Specific rules on labelling'

To ensure that the consumer is better informed, including with regard to modern forms of distribution, the information on labelling has been supplemented as follows: 'The labelling of cheeses with the designation of origin "Abondance" must include the designation of origin in characters at least two-thirds the size of the largest characters used on the label and display the European Union's PDO symbol.

Any cheese offered for sale at a cheese counter must bear a label or bandaging on one of its faces.'

3.5. *Amendment to point (9) 'National requirements'*

Addition of the key points to check with regard to the Specification.

3.6. *Other amendment: 'Packaging'*

To adapt to marketing of the cheese as a pre-packaged product, details are given of the way it is to be displayed for sale when pre-packaged: 'When on sale in pre-packaged form, three sides of each portion of the cheese must have a rind. However, this rind may be free of cheese smear.' This requirement helps the consumer identify the cheese, because the rind is an important aspect of the cheese and also facilitates on-the-spot checks of the products offered for sale to the consumer.

Since 'Abondance' has begun to be used as an ingredient in cooking, the amended specification also states that pieces of the cheese intended for processing may be packaged without rind.

SINGLE DOCUMENT

COUNCIL REGULATION (EC) No 510/2006

on the protection of geographical indications and designations of origin for agricultural products and foodstuffs⁽³⁾

'ABONDANCE'

EC No: FR-PDO-0117-01088 – 7.12.2012

PGI () PDO (X)

1. **Name**

'Abondance'

2. **Member State or Third Country**

France

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*

'Abondance' is a pressed, semi-cooked and renneted cheese made from raw whole milk. It is ripened for at least 100 days.

Its shape is that of a flat cylindrical millstone 7 to 8 cm high, with a concave heel and weighing between 6 and 12 kg.

It has a smear-ripened rind with a rough-textured appearance and a colour ranging from golden-yellow to brown. The cheese itself is soft, with a melt-in-the-mouth texture and no springiness, and ranges from ivory to pale yellow in colour. It generally has a light scattering of small holes. It may have a number of fine horizontal slit eyes.

It contains a minimum of 48 g of fat per 100 g of cheese after total desiccation and its dry matter must not be less than 58 g per 100 g of cheese.

3.3. *Raw materials (for processed products only)*

The milk used for making the cheese comes exclusively from cows of the Abondance, Tarentaise or Montbéliarde breeds.

All herds to which a declaration of identification for the 'Abondance' designation of origin applied on 7 December 2012 must be made up of:

— at least 35 % of livestock of the Abondance breed until 31 December 2015,

— at least 45 % of livestock of the Abondance breed from 1 January 2016 onwards.

⁽³⁾ Replaced by Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012.

Should it not be possible to comply with this requirement, at least 45 % of the herd of each milk producer must be made up of animals of the Abondance breed from 1 January 2016 onwards.

The herd of each milk producer that has signed a declaration of identification for the 'Abondance' designation of origin after 7 December 2012 must be made up of:

- at least 35 % of livestock of the Abondance breed until 31 December 2015,
- at least 45 % of livestock of the Abondance breed from 1 January 2016 onwards.

3.4. *Feed (for products of animal origin only)*

To ensure the link with the area, the herd's feed must essentially consist of fodder from the geographical area of origin. At least 50 % (gross weight) of the basic ration is made up of grass collected in the summer and of hay, which may be distributed without restriction throughout the winter.

The share of the feed sourced from outside the geographical area may not account for more than 35 % (dry weight) of the dry matter consumed by the herd annually.

During the winter period, the minimum grazing period for dairy cows is 150 consecutive or non-consecutive days.

Bringing in dried fodder from outside the geographical area is permitted only as a supplement to the locally sourced feed and may not exceed 30 % of the herd's annual dry fodder requirement, expressed in terms of gross weight of the herd on the holding.

The basic feed ration may be supplemented with supplementary feedingstuffs, but these are restricted to 1 800 kg (gross weight) per dairy cow per annum and 500 kg/livestock unit of heifers per annum. Authorised straight or compound feedingstuffs are set out in a positive list.

The herd's feed may not include silage products, fermented fodder, tied bales or feed that could have an adverse influence on the odour or taste of the milk or cheese or which present a risk of bacteriological contamination.

Transgenic crops are prohibited in all areas of farms producing milk intended for processing into 'Abondance'. This prohibition applies to all types of plant likely to be given as feed to animals on the holding and all crops liable to contaminate such plants.

3.5. *Specific steps in production that must take place in the defined geographical area*

The milk must be produced and the cheese manufactured and ripened within the geographical area.

3.6. *Specific rules on slicing, grating, packaging, etc.*

The cheeses must be wrapped individually to protect the cheese smear. However, this requirement may be waived for cheeses that are to be transferred to a cheese-cutting plant, packaging plant or another ripening plant, provided that the means of transport used avoids any changes to the rind.

When on sale in pre-packaged form, three sides of each portion of the cheese must have a rind. However, the rind may be free of cheese smear.

Pieces of the cheese intended for processing may be packaged without rind.

3.7. *Specific rules on labelling*

The labelling of cheeses with the designation of origin 'Abondance' must include the designation of origin in characters at least two-thirds the size of the largest characters used on the label and display the European Union's PDO symbol.

Any cheese offered for sale at a cheese counter must bear a label or bandaging on one of its faces.

Each whole 'Abondance' cheese intended for marketing has its own individual plate, thus ensuring that it can be identified. The plate is affixed to the heel of each whole cheese during pressing.

The identification plate is square-shaped and red in the case of dairy-made cheeses and oval-shaped and green in the case of farm cheeses. It must bear at least the following inscriptions:

- the identification code of the production workshop,
- in the case of farm cheeses, the word 'fermier' ('farm-made').

The month and day of production are given on the heel near the identification plate in numbers or letters made of casein or food-grade ink.

4. Concise definition of the geographical area

Abondance, Alex, Allèves, Allonzier-la-Caille, Amancy, Andilly, Annecy-le-Vieux, Arâches-la-Frasse, Arbusigny, Arenthon, Armoiy, Aviernoz, Ayse, (La) Balme-de-Thuy, (La) Baume, Beaumont, Bellevaux, Bernex, (Le) Biot, Bluffy, Boège, Bogève, Bonnevaux, Bonneville, (Le) Bouchet, Brenthonne, Brizon, Burdignin, Cercier, Cernex, Cervens, Chainaz-les-Frasses, Chamonix-Mont-Blanc, Champanges, (La) Chapelle-d'Abondance, (La) Chapelle-Rambaud, (La) Chapelle-Saint-Maurice, Charvonnex, Châtel, Châtillon-sur-Cluses, Chevaline, Chevenoz, Choisy, (Les) Clefs, (La) Clusaz, Cluses, Collonges-sous-Salève, Combloux, Cons-Sainte-Colombe, Contamine-sur-Arve, (Les) Contamines-Montjoie, Copponex, Cordon, Cornier, (La) Côte-d'Arbroz, Cruseilles, Cusy, Cuvat, Demi-Quartier, Digny-Saint-Clair, Domancy, Doussard, Duingt, Entremont, Entrevernes, Essert-Romand, Etaux, Évires, Faucigny, Faverges, Fessy, Féternes, Fillinges, (La) Forclaz, (Les) Gets, Giez, (Le) Grand-Bornand, Groisy, Gruffy, Habère-Lullin, Habère-Poche, Héry-sur-Alby, (Les) Houches, Larringes, Lathuile, Leschaux, Lucinges, Lugrin, Lullin, Lyaud, Magland, Manigod, Marcellaz, Marignier, Marlens, Marnaz, Megève, Mégevette, Meillerie, Menthon-Saint-Bernard, Menthonnex-en-Bornes, Mieussy, Mont-Saxonnex, Montmin, Montriond, Morillon, Morzine, (La) Muraz, Mûres, Nancy-sur-Cluses, Nâves-Parmelan, Novel, (Les) Ollières, Onnion, Orcier, Passy, Peillonex, Pers-Jussy, (Le) Petit-Bornand-les-Glières, Praz-sur-Arly, Présilly, Quintal, (Le) Reposoir, Reyvroz, (La) Rivière-Enverse, (La) Roche-sur-Foron, Saint-André-de-Boège, Saint-Blaise, Saint-Eustache, Saint-Ferréol, Saint-Gervais-les-Bains, Saint-Gingolph, Saint-Jean-d'Aulps, Saint-Jean-de-Sixt, Saint-Jean-de-Tholome, Saint-Jeoire, Saint-Jorioz, Saint-Laurent, Saint-Martin-Bellevue, Saint-Paul-en-Chablais, Saint-Pierre-en-Faucigny, Saint-Sigismond, Saint-Sixt, Sallanches, Samoëns, (Le) Sappey, Saxel, Scionzier, Serraval, Servoz, Sévrier, Seythenex, Seytroux, Sixt-Fer-à-Cheval, Talloires, Taninges, Thollon-les-Mémises, Thônes, Thorens-Glières, Thyez, (La) Tour, Vacheresse, Vailly, Vallorcine, Verchaix, (La) Vernaz, Vers, Veyrier-du-Lac, Villard, (Les) Villards-sur-Thônes, Villaz, Ville-en-Sallaz, Villy-le-Bouveret, Villy-le-Pelloux, Vinzier, Viuz-en-Sallaz, Viuz-la-Chiésaz, Vougy, Vovray-en-Bornes.

5. Link with the geographical area

5.1. Specificity of the geographical area

Natural factors

The geographical area of 'Abondance' was established on the basis of the area where production of the cheese originated: the Pays d'Abondance (including the Abondance Valley) in the Chablais region, in the northern part of the Department of Haute-Savoie between Lake Geneva and the Giffre Valley. The geographical area has specific climatic conditions owing to its geographical location and topography, its proximity to Lake Geneva and its extensive woodlands.

The geological characteristics of its soils (essentially calcareous pre-Alpine and sub-Alpine massifs and the calcareous massifs of the northern Alps, where the alpine level is poorly developed), along with its particular climate (high rainfall in summer) and marked temperature differences have resulted in rolling landscapes and enabled clearing of mountain pastures with a very rich flora.

Human factors

In these difficult living conditions, the most obvious way to use the land was by raising dairy cattle. Dairy farming, which has been practised in the area for centuries, is characterised by the use of specific breeds and a particular way of organising the use of mountain pastures.

The breeds used by the dairy farmers (Abondance, Tarentaise and Montbéliarde) are particularly well adapted to their natural environment. The 'Abondance' breed (its name comes from the 'Abondance Valley'), which is accustomed to the difficult climatic and topographical conditions, produces particularly hardy and resilient dual-purpose cattle which are predominantly used for milk production. Its milk has characteristics which make it particularly suitable for cheese-making. The breed, which is historically associated with this cheese, has been a particular focus of attention for dairy farmers in their desire to preserve and strengthen its presence in the geographical area and its contribution to the production of the cheese.

'Abondance' has been produced in this region for several centuries. Starting in the 13th century, the monks of Abondance Abbey encouraged the making of this cheese, in particular by promoting the clearing of pastures. Even today, the feed given to the dairy cows is essentially derived from the local pastures and alpine meadows. The alpine meadows are exploited using a system known in French as 'montagne individuelle' ('private mountain'). Under this system, herds are not grouped together. Rather, each family grazes their own herd separately. This grazing management method is characteristically employed in the alpine meadows of the region and historically associated with farm-based cheese production.

Nowadays, a considerable amount of 'Abondance' is produced on farms, but the production method has also been transferred to production in dairies. Nevertheless, the traditional know-how has been maintained, e.g. regarding the use of raw milk and the technology associated with semi-cooked cheese.

5.2. Specificity of the product

'Abondance' is a pressed, semi-cooked cheese made exclusively from raw and whole cow's milk and with a long ripening period.

'Abondance' distinguishes itself from other pressed cooked cheeses in particular by having a smaller size, a concave heel, a soft texture and a diverse range of aromas, generally accompanied by a slightly bitter taste.

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

The dairy cows, which are well adapted to the local environmental conditions, make good use of the rich flora of the geographical area. The flora of the meadows is the source of the aromatic precursors in 'Abondance'. The cheese-makers promote the presence of these precursors in the cheese by using raw whole milk which is not treated in any way liable to affect the flora.

'Abondance' is a pressed, semi-cooked cheese. The use of technology for making pressed semi-cooked cheeses gives it a softer texture than pressed cooked cheeses. This softness of texture has led to the use of a type of mould enabling the characteristic shape of 'Abondance' to be obtained. This shape makes the cheese easier to handle, especially when bringing it down from alpine pastures.

The cheese is relatively small compared to others, especially pressed cooked cheeses. This is directly linked to the way the family herd is managed on alpine pastures and the processing of the milk into cheese, which historically took place on the farm.

Production of this cheese is an integral part of the local economy and recognition of the designation has enabled traditional agricultural activities in the region to be maintained.

Reference to publication of the specification

(Article 5(7) of Regulation (EC) No 510/2006 (*)

<https://www.inao.gouv.fr/fichier/CdCAbondance.pdf>

(*) See footnote 3.