

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

(2017/C 194/13)

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⁾.

APPLICATION FOR APPROVAL OF AN AMENDMENT TO THE PRODUCT SPECIFICATION OF PROTECTED DESIGNATIONS OF ORIGIN/PROTECTED GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATIONS WHICH IS NOT MINOR

Application for approval of an amendment in accordance with the first subparagraph of Article 53(2), of Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012**'BLEU D'Auvergne'****EU No: PDO-FR-02214 — 4.1.2017****PDO (X) PGI ()****1. Applicant group and legitimate interest**

Syndicat Interprofessionnel Régional du 'Bleu d'Auvergne'

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The Syndicat Interprofessionnel Régional du 'Bleu d'Auvergne' is composed of operators of the PDO 'Bleu d'Auvergne' (producers, collectors, processors and ripeners) and has a legitimate interest in submitting the application.

2. Member State or Third Country

France.

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

- Name of product
- Description of product
- Geographical area
- Proof of origin
- Method of production
- Link
- Labelling
- Other: link, control

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 343, 14.12.2012, p. 1.

4. Type of amendment(s)

- Amendment to product specification of a registered PDO or PGI not to be qualified as minor in accordance with the third subparagraph of Article 53(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012
- Amendment to product specification of registered PDO or PGI for which a Single Document (or equivalent) has not been published not to be qualified as minor in accordance with the third subparagraph of Article 53(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012

5. Amendment(s)

Description of the product

In order to provide a full description of the product, it is added that 'Bleu d'Auvergne' is 'produced exclusively' from 'renneted' cow's milk and that it is an 'unpressed, uncooked, fermented, and salted' cheese.

The sentence:

'This cheese is produced in two sizes: — the large cheeses are approximately 20 cm in diameter, 8 to 10 cm in height and weigh 2 to 3 kg; — the small cheeses are approximately 10,5 cm in diameter and weigh 350 g, 500 g or 1 kg'

is replaced by the sentence:

'This cheese is produced in the form of a flat cylinder, between 19 and 23 cm in diameter, 8 and 11 cm in height, weighing between 2 and 3 kg'.

Therefore, only the large cheese (19 to 23 cm in diameter and 8 to 11 cm in height) is retained in the designation, since the small cheeses have not been made for many years. The diameter of the cheese ranges between 19 cm minimum and 23 cm maximum, which is more precise than the words 'approximately 20 cm' appearing in the current specification. The maximum height is increased by one centimetre to take account of observed practice.

The product must have a dry matter content of at least 51 % instead of 52 % and it is added that this parameter is determined 'after total desiccation' for inspection purposes. This amendment takes account of the gradual evolution of the product towards a creamier texture. Comparing the tasting notes and the dry extract results shows a positive correlation, with cheeses of good tasting quality often corresponding to the cheeses with the least dry matter.

The sentence:

'The cheese may be marketed under the designation of origin 'Bleu d'Auvergne' only from the 28th day following the date of renneting.'

is added, replacing the sentence:

'The cheese is ripened for at least four weeks for cheeses weighing more than 1 kg and for at least two weeks for cheeses weighing less than 1 kg.', which appears under the heading 'Method of production' in the current specification.

The ripening period of the cheeses is therefore replaced by a minimum period before marketing of equivalent duration, due to the introduction of the possibility of a storage period following the ripening period proper. This period is expressed in days rather than weeks and it is specified that it starts from the date of renneting, in accordance with customary practice and in order to facilitate inspection.

The rind of the product is described more precisely (instead of 'natural mould rind') by the sentences 'The 'Bleu d'Auvergne' rind is healthy, without wetness (mouillères) or exudation. It is not of a single, uniform colour. White, grey, green, blue and black mould may be present.' The following additions are made to the organoleptic description of the product: 'The inside of the cheese is white to ivory in colour, with cracks and an even distribution of blue-to-green veins. These veins are of a size between that of a wheat grain and a maize kernel. The texture is melt-in-the-mouth, creamy and fine. The taste of 'Bleu d'Auvergne' is intense, typical, and well-balanced, with aromas suggesting blue cheese, forest undergrowth and even mushrooms. It may be slightly salty and bitter. It is enhanced, to a greater or lesser extent depending on the length of the ripening period, by flavours from the activity of the *Penicillium roqueforti* mould.' This description, which results from organoleptic tests carried out by 'Bleu d'Auvergne' professionals, improves the characterisation of the product and is useful for the organoleptic test of the product during inspection.

It is added that "'Bleu d'Auvergne" can be marketed in the form of portions of any size.', since the product is widely distributed in segments.

Geographical area

Having supplemented the description of the ripening stage by distinguishing a period of ripening in cellars at between 6 °C and 12 °C, and possibly a period of cold storage at between zero and 6 °C, the first sentence indicating the steps located in the geographical area is supplemented to include the storage of the cheese until the 28th day from the date of renneting.

The delimitation of the geographical area is changed. The geographical area is reduced from 1 158 to 630 municipalities. It has refocused on the Hercynian basement and its volcanic cover, excluding the immense sedimentary basins and the broad alluvial valleys. Its emphasis is on the pasture farming regions, where practices are geared towards grass, and which benefit from an altitude and rainfall that are conducive to grass production. Finally, it is part of the traditional area for 'Bleu d'Auvergne' and reflects the preservation of current milk processing and collection practices for 'Bleu d'Auvergne'. In the regions excluded from the geographical area, there is no longer any recognised milk collection for the production of 'Bleu d'Auvergne' or actual production of 'Bleu d'Auvergne'.

Proof of origin

Provision is made for a declaration identifying operators to replace the declaration of aptitude. Identification of the operators is a prerequisite for their accreditation, recognising their ability to meet the requirements of the specification for the designation from which they wish to benefit. Provision is also made for the requisite declarations for the knowledge and monitoring of the products to be marketed under designation of origin.

The list of registrations to be made by the operators has been supplemented. The clarification of the conditions of production defined by the specification require additional registration criteria to allow for their inspection.

Method of production

Milk production:

Provisions concerning the conditions for breeding, management and feeding of the dairy herd are introduced to document the traditional practices.

The dairy herd is defined. This is 'the group of dairy cows and heifers to restock the herd present on the farm', on the understanding that 'dairy cows include lactating cows and dry cows' and 'heifers are animals between weaning and first calving.' The purpose of this definition is for it to be clearly established which animals are referred to in the terms 'dairy herd', 'dairy cows' and 'heifers' in the rest of the specification, to avoid any confusion.

It is added that the introduction into dairy herds of cows or heifers born and/or reared outside the geographical area is prohibited. Historically, the breeders of the geographical area have been self-sufficient when providing for the restocking of their herds, as heifers or cows purchased outside the geographical area tended to experience difficulties in adapting to both the mid-mountain environment and the type of feed, leading to their rapid culling. In this way, the prohibition on introducing into the dairy herds animals born and/or reared outside the geographical area enables better adaptation of the animals to the environment and feed, especially as there is no requirement as to breed.

However, provision is made that, for health reasons or for the Abondance, Aubrac, Brune, Ferrandaise, Simmental Française and Tarentaise breeds, which are present in low numbers in the geographical area, a derogation may be granted, giving full details and for a limited period of time, by the competent national authority. These breeds are renowned for being better suited to mountain areas, which enables them to meet the requirement of adaptation to the geographical environment. Moreover, they are subject to compliance with the same production conditions as the cows of other breeds if they are present on a farm operating under the PDO 'Bleu d'Auvergne'.

It is added that 'Throughout the year, the dairy herd is fed exclusively on fodder from the geographical area covered by the designation.' This feed autonomy in the geographical area contributes to reinforcing the link with the region.

The composition of the basic feed is then explained: it consists of all fodder, including bundles of dried long lucerne, and excluding brassicas, as they have a strong impact on the organoleptic characteristics of the milk (cabbage odour).

The proportion of grass, hay, wilted grass or silage in the basic feed of the dairy cows is set at 70 % minimum on average over the year, expressed in dry matter. It is set at 30 % minimum per day. Outside the grazing period, the

dairy cows receive hay (dried cut grass with a dry matter content exceeding 80 %), amounting to 3 kg minimum in dry matter per cow per day. Production of 'Bleu d'Auvergne' is rooted in a mountain area dominated by the production of grass used to feed dairy cows. The provisions of the specification confirm the role of grass as staple feed.

Grazing is mandatory for at least 150 days per year for lactating dairy cows, with a minimum of 30 ares of grazing land per cow. Grazing is a key element in the feed of lactating dairy cows in the geographical area covered by the designation of origin. It is in keeping with the concept of the importance of grass in the feed of dairy cows, expressed in the previous paragraph.

It is prohibited to rear the dairy herd without a grazing area, in order to ensure the link with the region via the animals' feed.

The animal density on the farms is limited to one dairy cow per hectare of grazing area, which follows on from the proposals above giving precedence to feed from the farm's fodder resources, and therefore from the geographical area, and contributes to preserving the relatively extensive nature of the farms.

The fodder storage conditions for dairy cows are described: pile and bunker silos are constructed on a concrete or stabilised platform; dry fodder is stored under permanent shelter. These provisions are designed to preserve the quality of the fodder.

For the dairy cows, complementary feedstuffs are limited to 1 800 kg of dry matter per dairy cow per year, on average for all the dairy cows together; for the heifers, complementary feedstuffs may not exceed 30 % of the total feed, expressed in dry matter, on average for the year. This is so as to avoid such feedstuffs playing too large a part in the feed, and to thus give precedence to the basic feed from the geographical area. Furthermore, the raw materials authorised in the complementary feedstuffs for the dairy cows and the authorised additives are each the subject of a positive list, necessary to better manage, guarantee and monitor the feed. Tanning of cattle-cake with formaldehyde is prohibited, as this practice does not accord with traditional practices.

A provision prohibiting GMOs in animal feed and farm crops is added in order to preserve the traditional nature of the feed.

Provisions on the application of organic fertilisers are defined in order to preserve the feed of the cows from any risk of contamination by pollutants.

Milk used:

It is added that the milk is stored in a refrigerated tank after milking and may not be kept on the farm for more than 48 hours in order to limit its degradation and to avoid the development of undesirable bacteria.

It is added that 'The emptying of the tankers into fixed tanks must be carried out within the geographical area covered by the designation.' This provision is designed to guarantee the traceability of the milk collected and to facilitate inspection.

It is added that the milk used may be raw, thermised or pasteurised, which corresponds to the practices implemented for several decades.

Processing:

The preparation of the milk before renneting is described, for farmhouse production and dairy production, in accordance with the know-how, so as to guarantee that both types of production are preserved.

- In the case of farmhouse production, milk from at most two successive milkings is used (the first being refrigerated so that it will keep) and renneting takes place no later than 16 hours from the first milking.
- In the case of dairy production, pre-maturation of the milk is carried out before renneting, at a temperature of between 6 °C and 14 °C for a minimum of 4 hours. Bringing to pre-maturation temperature may be accompanied by the addition of ferments and takes place within 24 hours of the milk being delivered to the place where the cheese is made. These conditions promote the development of the lactic bacteria present or added to the medium. In this way, they allow slight acidification to be initiated before renneting, and curds with a dominant lactic character to be produced subsequently. Pre-maturation is a historical procedure in dairy production of 'Bleu d'Auvergne'.

- For both types of production, homogenisation and standardisation of the fat content are allowed. Homogenisation is a technique that promotes the development of the aroma of the cheese, allows a better distribution of the fat in the curd and enables a whiter cheese to be obtained, showing the veining more clearly.

The renneting temperature is kept within a range between 30 and 34 °C. It has a considerable influence over the renneting activity in this important step.

Penicillium roqueforti is cited by name in the list of ingredients, production aids and additives authorised in the milk and during the production of 'Bleu d'Auvergne', apart from the dairy raw materials. In this same list, the reference to 'innocuous bacterial cultures, yeasts and moulds' is replaced by a reference to 'other' cultures (apart from *Penicillium*) of bacteria, yeasts and moulds 'which have been proved to be innocuous through use' for greater precision. The injection of *Penicillium roqueforti* is then affirmed, as it is a key element in the technological process for the production of 'Bleu d'Auvergne'. It should be noted that the reference to '*Penicillium roqueforti*' replaces the reference to '*Penicillium glaucum*' mentioned in the summary published, following developments in the knowledge of moulds and their classification. Moreover, to avoid any ambiguity during inspection, it is specified that reconstituted culture media are authorised as a ferment growing medium.

After coagulation, the stages of cutting and stirring the curd and the separation of most of the curd and whey before putting into moulds have been introduced to reflect customary practice: 'After coagulation, the curd is cut into cubes of a size between that of a maize kernel and a hazel nut. The stirring enables a 'styled' curd grain to be obtained. Before placing in moulds, most of the whey is separated from the curd. The curd is placed in the moulds after cutting and stirring.' The aim is therefore to describe the manufacture using the size of the curd grain after cutting (from the size of a maize kernel to that of a hazel nut) and of noting the (sought-after) appearance of 'styled' curd grain (*grain coiffé*), which is subsequently instrumental in the formation of the cracks, since the curd grains remain individual at the time of placing in the mould.

Details are given of the draining of the curd after placing in the mould. A maximum period of 72 hours is defined, replacing the vague adverb 'slowly' used in the current specification, in order to document the current practices and to provide a value for carrying out inspections. It is added that the draining is done without pressing, regularly turning the cheese over and at a temperature enabling a pH of less than 5 at the end of the stage. This pH value is a compulsory step to obtain sufficient draining for the 'Bleu d'Auvergne'.

The sentence 'The dairy raw materials, partly finished products, curd and fresh cheese may not be conserved at a temperature below 0 °C' is replaced by the sentence 'Processing may not be deferred for the curds; and the dairy raw materials, partly finished products and fresh cheese may not be conserved at a temperature below 0 °C'. This is so as to prohibit deferring the processing of the curd by any means whatsoever, as this does not correspond to any historical practice.

The salting methods are modified to adapt to the development of production tools.

The sentences:

'The cheese is salted after draining, by rubbing or sprinkling with salt, over its entire surface, in a room at a temperature that may vary from 14 °C to 22 °C. This salting may be preceded by salting in brine'

replacing the sentence:

'The cheese is drained slowly, salted by hand, in two stages, using dry coarse salt and turning the cheese over several times'. The manual technique in two stages, which is still used, can no longer remain the only method of salting due to the development of these tools. Coarse salt and fine salt may both be used. Salting by rubbing or sprinkling with salt, whether by hand or not, allows the formation of the typical 'Bleu d'Auvergne' rind. It may be preceded by brining the product, which is a practice that has been used for some years to supplement the salting by rubbing or sprinkling with salt without affecting the organoleptic qualities of the product, as shown by the tasting results. It is specified that the salting is carried out at the end of the draining.

The pricking stage is supplemented, indicating that the cheese is pricked only once and defining a maximum period of 10 days between renneting and pricking so as to guarantee the quality of the product.

Maturing:

Instead of 'The minimum maturing period is four weeks for cheeses weighing more than 1 kg and two weeks for cheeses weighing less than 1 kg', it is indicated that 'From the date of pricking, the cheese is matured uncovered

in a cellar or ripening room at a temperature of between 6 °C and 12 °C and a humidity level exceeding 90 % for at least 15 days. The cheese may then be stored in a room at a temperature of between 0 °C and 6 °C until the 28th day following renneting', according to customary practice. The stage of maturing uncovered at a temperature of between 6 °C at 12 °C and a humidity level exceeding 90 % allows the development of *Penicillium roqueforti* in the cheese. Depending on this development, and at least 15 days after the pricking date, the cheese is either stored in a cellar at a temperature of between 6 °C and 12 °C until the 28th day after the date of renneting or is kept in a room at a temperature of between 0 °C and 6 °C, to slow the development of *Penicillium roqueforti*, until the 28th day after the date of renneting. The purpose is to control the growth of the blue mould and reveal the aromatic panel of the product.

It is added that the product may not be cut into portions before the 28th day following the date of renneting in order to guarantee the integrity of the product until it has acquired all its characteristics and to avoid denaturing it.

Labelling

A minimum size of character for the registered name is introduced: 'at least two-thirds the size of the largest characters on the label', in order to ensure that the name is sufficiently legible in relation to the other information appearing on the label.

The obligation is included to show the PDO symbol of the European Union.

It is added that it is forbidden to place any qualifier directly next to the registered designation of origin. This is an update to comply with the developments in terms of labelling of products under designation of origin.

To take account of the diversity of types of packaging, the sentence indicating that cheese must be wrapped in tin foil is deleted; other packaging may be used.

Other

The heading 'Elements justifying the link with the geographical area' is redrafted and structured into three parts. The part 'specific nature of the geographical area' includes the natural factors, highlighting the grass production of the geographical area, and the human factors, summarising the historical aspect and stressing the specific know-how of the producers of 'Bleu d'Auvergne' (feed of dairy cows focused mainly on grass, mixing the curd grains in the cheese-making vat, draining without pressing, salting, pricking and maturing). The 'specific nature of the product' part has been updated to include the elements added to the description of the product. Finally, the 'causal link' point explains the interactions between the natural and human factors and the product.

It is added to the sub-heading 'Product tests' that 'the tests are carried out by sampling from cheese of at least 28 days old from the date of renneting, according to the procedures described in the control plan'. These terms and conditions are then included in the control plan of the designation of origin drawn up by an inspection body.

In the heading 'References concerning the inspection body', the name and details of the inspection bodies have been updated.

Finally, a table presenting the main points to be checked and the method for their assessment is added.

SINGLE DOCUMENT

'BLEU D'AUVERGNE'

EU No: PDO-FR-02214 — 4.1.2017

PDO (X) PGI ()

1. **Name(s)**

'Bleu d'Auvergne'

2. **Member State or Third Country**

France

3. Description of the agricultural product or foodstuff

3.1. Type of product

Class 1.3. Cheese

3.2. Description of product to which the name in (1) applies

'Bleu d'Auvergne' is an unpressed, uncooked, fermented, and salted cheese with blue veins, made exclusively with renneted cow's milk.

This cheese is produced in the form of a flat cylinder between 19 and 23 cm in diameter, 8 and 11 cm in height, weighing between 2 and 3 kg.

The fat content is at least 50 % after total desiccation and the dry matter content is at least 51 %.

The cheese may be marketed under the designation of origin 'Bleu d'Auvergne' only from the 28th day following the date of renneting.

The 'Bleu d'Auvergne' rind is healthy, without wetness (*mouillères*) or exudation. It is not of a single, uniform colour. White, grey, green, blue and black mould may be present.

The inside of the cheese is white to ivory in colour, with cracks and an even distribution of blue-to-green veins.

These veins are of a size between that of a wheat grain and a maize kernel.

The texture is melt-in-the-mouth, creamy and fine.

The taste of 'Bleu d'Auvergne' is intense, typical, and well-balanced, with aromas suggesting blue cheese, forest undergrowth and even mushrooms. It may be slightly salty and bitter. It is enhanced, to a greater or lesser extent depending on the length of the ripening period, by flavours from the activity of the *Penicillium roqueforti* mould.

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

Throughout the year, the dairy herd is fed exclusively on fodder from the geographical area covered by the designation. The middle mountain terrain and climate of the geographical area are not conducive technically to production in the geographical area of complementary feedstuffs fed to the dairy herd. For the dairy cows, these complementary feedstuffs are limited to 1 800 kg of dry matter per dairy cow per year, on average for all the dairy cows together; for the heifers, complementary feedstuffs may not exceed 30 % of the total feed, expressed in dry matter, on average for the year. Consequently, these provisions mean that at least 70 % of the dry matter of the total feed made available to the dairy herd is produced in the geographical area.

With the exception of brassicas, which are prohibited in the form of fodder for all the animals on the farm, all fodder may be included in the composition of the basic feed of the dairy herd. Bundles of dried long lucerne are part of it.

The proportion of grass, hay, wilted grass or silage in the basic feed of the dairy cows is fixed at 70 % minimum on average over the year, expressed in dry matter.

The proportion of grass, hay, wilted grass or silage in the basic feed of the dairy cows is fixed at 30 % minimum per day, expressed in dry matter.

Outside the grazing period, the dairy cows receive hay, amounting to 3 kg minimum in dry matter per cow per day. Hay is dried cut grass with a dry matter content exceeding 80 %.

When grass is available, grazing is mandatory for lactating dairy cows as soon as the weather allows. In any event, the grazing period must amount to at least 150 days per year.

Complementary feedstuffs and additives distributed to dairy cows comprise only the authorised raw materials and additives specified in a positive list.

Only plants, co-products and complementary feedstuffs derived from non-transgenic products are authorised in the animal feed.

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

The milk is produced and the cheese made, matured and conserved until the 28th day following the date of renneting within the geographical area.

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

'Bleu d'Auvergne' can be marketed in the form of portions of any size.

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

The label must include the name of the designation of origin in characters at least two-thirds the size of the largest characters on the label.

It is forbidden to place any qualifier directly next to the registered designation of origin in the label, advertising, invoices or commercial papers, with the exception of trademarks or brand names.

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

The geographical area for 'Bleu d'Auvergne' covers:

Department of Aveyron:

Municipalities of Brommat, Lacroix-Barrez, Mur-de-Barrez, Murols, Taussac, Thérondels.

Department of Cantal:

Cantons of Arpajon-sur-Cère, Aurillac-1, Aurillac-2, Aurillac-3, Mauriac, Murat, Naucelles, Riom-ès-Montagnes, Saint-Flour-1, Saint-Flour-2, Saint-Paul-des-Landes, Vic-sur-Cère, Ydes.

Municipalities of Alleuze, Anglards-de-Saint-Flour, Boisset, Celoux, Chaliers, Chazelles, Clavières, Lavastrie, Leynhac, Lorcières, Marcolès, Maurs, Mourjou, Neuvéglise, Quézac, Rageade, Roannes-Saint-Mary, Rouziers, Ruynes-en-Margeride, Saint-Antoine, Saint-Constant-Fournoulès, Saint-Étienne-de-Maurs, Saint-Georges, Saint-Julien-de-Toursac, Saint-Mamet-la-Salvetat, Sansac-de-Marmiesse, Soulages, Vabres, Val d'Arcomie, Védrines-Saint-Loup, Vitrac.

Department of Corrèze:

Municipalities of Atiliac, Auriac, Bassignac-le-Bas, Bassignac-le-Haut, Bort-les-Orgues, Camps-Saint-Mathurin-Léobazel, La Chapelle-Saint-Géraud, Confolent-Port-Dieu, Darazac, Eygurande, Feyt, Gouilles, Hautefage, Lafage-sur-Sombre, Lamazière-Basse, Lappleau, Laroche-près-Feyt, Latronche, Laval-sur-Luzège, Liginac, Margerides, Mercœur, Merlines, Mestes, Monestier-Merlines, Monestier-Port-Dieu, Neuvic, Palisse, Reygade, Rilhac-Xaintrie, Saint-Bonnet-les-Tours-de-Merle, Saint-Bonnet-près-Bort, Saint-Cirgues-la-Loutre, Saint-Étienne-aux-Clos, Saint-Exupéry-les-Roches, Saint-Fréjoux, Saint-Geniez-ô-Merle, Saint-Hilaire-Foissac, Saint-Hilaire-Luc, Saint-Julien-aux-Bois, Saint-Julien-le-Pèlerin, Saint-Julien-près-Bort, Saint-Pantaléon-de-Lappleau, Saint-Privat, Saint-Victour, Sarroux, Sérandon, Servièrès-le-Château, Sexcles, Soursac, Thalamy, Ussel, Veyrières.

Department of Haute-Loire:

Municipalities of Ally, Arlet, Autrac, Auvers, La Besseyre-Saint-Mary, Blesle, Bonneval, La Chaise-Dieu, La Chapelle-Geneste, Charraix, Chastel, Chazelles, Cistrières, Cronic, Desges, Espalem, Ferrussac, Grenier-Montgon, Lubilhac, Malvières, Mercœur, Pébrac, Pinols, Saint-Austremoine, Saint-Cirgues, Saint-Étienne-sur-Blesle, Sembadel, Tailhac.

Department of Lot:

Municipalities of Anglars, Bannes, Bessonies, Le Bourg, Le Bouyssou, Cahus, Cardaillac, Cornac, Espeyroux, Frayssinhes, Gorses, Labastide-du-Haut-Mont, Labathude, Lacapelle-Marival, Latouille-Lentillac, Latronquièrre, Laurettes, Laval-de-Cère, Leyme, Molières, Montet-et-Bouxal, Prendeignes, Sabadel-Latronquièrre, Saint-Bressou, Saint-Cirgues, Saint-Hilaire, Saint-Maurice-en-Quercy, Saint-Médard-Nicourby, Saint-Perdoux, Saint-Vincent-du-Pendit, Sainte-Colombe, Sénaillac-Latronquièrre, Sousceyrac-en-Quercy, Terrou, Teyssieu, Viazac.

Department of Lozère:

Cantons of Langogne, Saint-Chély-d'Apcher.

Municipalities of Albaret-le-Comtal, Arzenc-d'Apcher, Aumont-Aubrac, Les Bessons, Brion, Chambon-le-Château, Chauchailles, Chaulhac, La Chaze-de-Peyre, Estables, La Fage-Montivernoux, La Fage-Saint-Julien, Fau-de-Peyre, Fontans, Fournels, Grandrieu, Javols, Julianges, Lachamp, Lajo, Les Laubies, Le Malzieu-Forain, Le Malzieu-Ville, Les Monts-Verts, Noalhac, La Panouse, Paulhac-en-Margeride, Ribennes, Rieutort-de-Randon, Saint-Alban-sur-Limagnole, Saint-Amans, Saint-Denis-en-Margeride, Saint-Gal, Saint-Juéry, Saint-Laurent-de-Veyrès, Saint-Léger-du-Malzieu, Saint-Paul-le-Froid, Saint-Privat-du-Fau, Saint-Sauveur-de-Peyre, Saint-Symphorien, Sainte-Colombe-de-Peyre, Sainte-Eulalie, Serverette, Servières, Termes, La Villedieu.

Department of Puy-de-Dôme:

Municipalities of Aix-la-Fayette, Ambert, Les Ancizes-Comps, Anzat-le-Luguet, Apchat, Arlanc, Augerolles, Aurières, Auzelles, Avèze, Baffie, Bagnols, Bertignat, Besse-et-Saint-Anastaise, Beurières, Bongheat, Bort-l'Étang, La Bourboule, Bourg-Lastic, Briffons, Bromont-Lamothe, Brousse, Bulhon, La Celle, Ceilloux, Ceysnat, Chambon-sur-Dolore, Chambon-sur-Lac, Chaméane, Champagnat-le-Jeune, Champétières, Chapdes-Beaufort, La Chapelle-Agnon, La Chapelle-sur-Usson, Charbonnières-les-Vieilles, Charensat, Charnat, Chastreix, Chaumont-le-Bourg, Cisternes-la-Forêt, Combrailles, Compains, Condat-en-Combraille, Condat-lès-Montboissier, Courpière, Crevant-Laveine, Cros, Culhat, Cunlhat, Domaize, Doranges, Dorat, Dore-l'Église, Échandelys, Égliseneuve-d'Entraigues, Égliseneuve-des-Liards, Églisolles, Escoutoux, Espinhal, Estandeuil, Esteil, Fayet-le-Château, Fayet-Ronaye, Fernoël, La Forie, Fournols, Gelles, Giat, La Godivelle, La Goutelle, Grandrif, Grandval, Herment, Heume-l'Église, Isserteaux, Job, Jumeaux, Labessette, Landogne, Laqueuille, Larodde, Lastic, Lezoux, Limons, Luzillat, Manglieu, Manzat, Marat, Marsac-en-Livradois, Mauzun, Mayres, Mazaye, Mazoires, Medeyrolles, Messeix, Miremont, Le Monestier, Mons, Mont-Dore, Montel-de-Gelat, Montfermy, Montmorin, Murat-le-Quaire, Murol, Nébouzat, Néronde-sur-Dore, Neuville, Noalhat, Novacelles, Olby, Olliegues, Olmet, Orcival, Orléat, Paslières, Perpezat, Peschadoires, Peslières, Picherande, Pontaumur, Pontgibaud, Prondines, Pulvérières, Puy-Saint-Gulmier, Queuille, Roche-Charles-la-Mayrand, Rochefort-Montagne, Saillant, Saint-Alyre-d'Arlanc, Saint-Alyre-ès-Montagne, Saint-Amant-Roche-Savine, Saint-Anthème, Saint-Avit, Saint-Bonnet-le-Bourg, Saint-Bonnet-le-Chastel, Saint-Bonnet-près-Orcival, Saint-Clément-de-Valorgue, Saint-Dier-d'Auvergne, Saint-Donat, Saint-Éloy-la-Glacière, Saint-Étienne-des-Champs, Saint-Étienne-sur-Usson, Saint-Ferréol-des-Côtes, Saint-Flour, Saint-Genès-Champanelle, Saint-Genès-Champespe, Saint-Genès-la-Tourette, Saint-Georges-de-Mons, Saint-Germain-près-Herment, Saint-Germain-l'Herm, Saint-Gervais-sous-Meymont, Saint-Hilaire-les-Monges, Saint-Jacques-d'Ambur, Saint-Jean-d'Heurs, Saint-Jean-des-Ollières, Saint-Jean-en-Val, Saint-Jean-Saint-Gervais, Saint-Julien-Puy-Lavèze, Saint-Just, Saint-Martin-des-Olmes, Saint-Martin-d'Ollières, Saint-Nectaire, Saint-Ours, Saint-Pierre-Colamine, Saint-Pierre-le-Chastel, Saint-Pierre-Roche, Saint-Priest-des-Champs, Saint-Quentin-sur-Sauxillanges, Saint-Romain, Saint-Sauves-d'Auvergne, Saint-Sauveur-la-Sagne, Saint-Sulpice, Saint-Victor-la-Rivière, Sainte-Agathe, Sainte-Catherine, Sallèdes, Saulzet-le-Froid, Sauvagnat, Sauvessanges, Sauviat, Sauxillanges, Savennes, Sermentizon, Singles, Sugères, Tauves, Thiers, Thiolières, Tortebeisse, La Tour-d'Auvergne, Tours-sur-Meymont, Tralaigues, Trémouille-Saint-Loup, Trézioux, Valbeleix, Valz-sous-Châteauneuf, Vernet-la-Varenne, Le Vernet-Sainte-Marguerite, Verneugheol, Vernines, Vertolaye, Villosanges, Vinzelles, Viverols, Voingt.

5. Link with the geographical area

The geographical area of the 'Bleu d'Auvergne' cheese covers the central-northern part of the Massif Central.

It is based mainly on the Hercynian basement of the Massif Central, composed of metamorphic and granitic rocks, with a volcanic cover.

It is a mid-mountain area, generally culminating at over 1 000 m and at an altitude throughout exceeding 500 m.

It is characterised by a predominantly mountain climate, balanced to the west by the influences of an oceanic climate and to the east by the influences of a modified continental climate. Within this at-times complex climate, the most decisive parameter is the rainfall pattern, which plays a major role in the abundant grass production observed in the terrain. The geographical area therefore corresponds to the sectors where rainfall exceeds 800 mm/year.

In terms of human factors, the Puy-de-Dôme area located to the west of the Auvergne Mountains, which is conducive to grass-growing and milk production, is the historical birthplace of the production of 'Bleu d'Auvergne', which appeared in the mid-19th century. This sector is the primary nucleus of the designation, from which production gradually developed. Of farmhouse origin, production gradually spread to dairies in the second half of the 19th century, notably thanks to the technical innovations advanced by Antoine Roussel, a local cheese producer who introduced the pricking of the cheese. The dissemination of this method from the end of the 19th century led to the appearance of a second manufacturing base in the south-west of the Cantal Massif. Production of 'Bleu d'Auvergne' then gradually extended to the entire geographical area. A definition of 'Bleu d'Auvergne' was confirmed in 1934 by the Ministry of Agriculture and the product was granted designation of origin status in March 1975.

Today, the grass produced in the geographical area still receives precedence in the feed of the dairy cows, representing on average over the year more than two thirds of the basic feed. Grazing is obligatory for at least 150 days per year.

Moreover, the production of 'Bleu d'Auvergne' involves specific know-how. The curd grains are mixed in the cheese-making vat with a view to 'styling' them, which means coating them in a thin film, which prevents them from consolidating when placed in the mould. They are then placed in the mould. This is followed by draining without pressing, regularly turning the cheese over. The cheese is salted at the end of draining by rubbing or sprinkling with salt, over its entire surface, then pricked once to air the cheese. Finally, the cheese is matured in a damp, aired cellar.

'Bleu d'Auvergne' is cow's milk cheese, weighing 2 to 3 kg; the inside of the cheese has marbling of a size between that of a wheat grain and a maize kernel and an even distribution of blue-to-green veins over its entire surface.

Its taste is intense, typical, and well-balanced, with aromas suggesting blue cheese, forest undergrowth and even mushrooms. It is enhanced by the flavours from the activity of the *Penicillium roqueforti* mould.

Production of 'Bleu d'Auvergne' is rooted in a mid-mountain area where the altitude and climate, characterised by heavy rainfall, promotes significant grass production used to feed the dairy cows, especially through grazing.

In addition, this high altitude volcanic and granitic earth of the central plateau, with long and harsh winters, has long determined the specific production practices.

The manufacture of this cheese, weighing 2 to 3 kg, meant that it could be kept for a significant period and provided a solution to the problems of processing and deferment imposed by the characteristics of the climate and human needs. Moreover, this production for a long time constituted an alternative to that of 'Cantal' for small-scale cheese-makers who had insufficient milk to produce a 'Cantal' cheese.

The organoleptic characteristics of 'Bleu d'Auvergne' are determined in particular by the use of a specific manufacturing technique. The 'styling' of the grains by means of stirring in the vat and the draining without pressing promotes the creation of evenly distributed holes in the cheese. The pricking creates air vents in the inside of the cheese. The oxygen supplied by these vents allows the development of *Penicillium roqueforti* in the holes. This explains the very fine marbling (of a size between that of a wheat grain and a maize kernel), evenly distributed and blue-green in colour of the 'Bleu d'Auvergne'. The activity of the *Penicillium roqueforti* also contributes to forming the taste of the product. The salting by rubbing or sprinkling with salt over the entire surface of the cheese allows the draining to be completed and plays an important role in constructing the intense, typical taste of 'Bleu d'Auvergne'. Finally, the maturing in damp, aired cellars allows the development of the aromas characteristic of blue cheese, forest undergrowth and mushrooms of 'Bleu d'Auvergne'.

Reference to publication of the specification

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

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