C/2025/2612

5.5.2025

Publication of the communication of an approved standard amendment to a product specification of a geographical indication in accordance with Article 5(4) of Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2025/27 ([1])

(C/2025/2612)

COMMUNICATION OF APPROVAL OF A STANDARD AMENDMENT

(Article 24 of Regulation (EU) 2024/1143)

'Mozzarella di Gioia del Colle'

EU No: PDO-IT-02384-AM01 – 12.2.2025

1. **Name of product**

'Mozzarella di Gioia del Colle'

2. **Geographical indication type**

☒ Protected Designation of Origin (PDO)

☐ Protected Geographical Indication (PGI)

☐ Geographical Indication (GI)

3. **Sector**

☒ agricultural products

☐ wine

☐ spirit drinks

4. **Country to which the geographical area belongs**

Italy

5. **Member State authority communicating the standard amendment**

MASAF [Ministry of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forestry]

6. **Qualification as standard amendment**

The amendment is a standard one within the meaning of Article 24(4) of Regulation (EU) 2024/1143 as it does not include a change in the name, does not risk voiding the link and does not entail further restrictions on the marketing of the product.

7. **Description of the approved standard amendment(s)**

1. *Amendment concerning Article 5 of the product specification relating to raw materials*

The amendment affects the period within which the milk must be processed.

The amended sentence is as follows:

'Must be processed within 48 hours of the last milking.'

([1]) Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2025/27 of 30 October 2024 supplementing Regulation (EU) 2024/1143 of the European Parliament and of the Council with rules concerning the registration and the protection of geographical indications, traditional specialities guaranteed and optional quality terms and repealing Delegated Regulation (EU) No 664/2014 (OJ L, 2025/27, 15.1.2025, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg_del/2025/27/oj).

Reasons:

In the previous version reference was made to the first milking.

This was changed because the previous version disqualified the batch of milk collected on Saturday morning, which includes the first milking on Friday evening (e.g. 17.00) and the milking on Saturday morning. This is due to the fact that, due to the needs of the dairy (no processing takes place on Sundays), the milk would not be processed until Monday morning (04.00 in the morning), i.e. 59 hours after the first milking. The amendment means that the batch of milk collected on Saturday (last milking at 06.00) may also be processed on the Monday (04.00 in the morning) because the 48 hours are counted from the last milking.

This amendment has no impact on the quality of the milk processed and prevents financial losses to farmers.

The amendment does not affect the single document.

2. *Amendment concerning Article 8 of the product specification and point 3.6 of the single document relating to the specific rules concerning labelling of the product*

This amendment concerns one of the information items on the label.

Specifically, it was decided to delete the following words:

'(...) and production date (...)'

The sole purpose of this amendment is to avoid confusing consumers as regards the various dates already on the label, thereby highlighting the expiry date of the product. In addition, due to logistical requirements, the product does not arrive on supermarket shelves until 4/5 days after the date of production. This time spent transporting and stacking the goods means that consumers may see the Mozzarella as no longer being fresh, because the product is not available until 4/5 days after production.

The amendment affects the single document.

SINGLE DOCUMENT

1. **Name(s) (of PDO or PGI)**

'Mozzarella di Gioia del Colle'

2. **Member State or Third Country**

Italy

3. **Description of the agricultural product or foodstuff**

3.1. *Combined Nomenclature code*

— 04 – DAIRY PRODUCE; BIRDS' EGGS; NATURAL HONEY; EDIBLE PRODUCTS OF ANIMAL ORIGIN, NOT ELSEWHERE SPECIFIED OR INCLUDED

0406 - Cheese and curd

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

'Mozzarella di Gioia del Colle' is a fresh stretched-curd cheese made with whole cow's milk only and a whey starter culture. It is characterised by:

a) The following chemical composition (values for fresh cheese): lactose ≤ 0,6 %, lactic acid ≥ 0,20 %, moisture 58-65 %, fat 15-21 % on a wet basis;

b) A taste reminiscent of slightly soured milk, with a pleasant after-taste of fermentation or sour whey (stronger in freshly made cheese) and a sour milky aroma, sometimes accompanied by a slight hint of butter;

c) An absence of preservatives, additives and processing aids.

'Mozzarella di Gioia del Colle' has a smooth or slightly fibrous surface. The cheese is glossy, not slimy or flaky. It is a white cheese, possibly with a slight straw-coloured tinge depending on the season. When the cheese is cut, it should have a springy consistency and be free of defects. A small amount of white whey should ooze from the cut cheese.

'Mozzarella di Gioia del Colle' comes in three shapes: round, twisted into knots, and braided. Depending on the shape and size, portion weight varies from 50 g to 1 000 g. The cheese is marketed immersed in preservative liquid (water, possibly with added salt and slightly acidified).

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

The cows' diet may also include cereal-based (maize, barley, wheat, oats) and legume-based (soya, broad beans, field beans, field peas) concentrates, meal or flakes, which may also be administered as complementary feed. Carob and cereal processing by-products - common wheat bran and middlings, durum wheat middlings - can also be used, provided that they do not exceed 40 % of dry matter. Finally, the cows' diet can be supplemented with vitamin and mineral complexes.

To avoid compromising the quality characteristics conferred on 'Mozzarella di Gioia del Colle' by its link with the local area, at least 60 % of the products used to feed the cows must come from the area described in point 4. This percentage requirement is met using grass and/or hay from meadows located within the identified area. It is the portion of the feed which is associated with digestible fibre, broadly defined as 'forage' (grass and/or hay, pasture, etc.), and it has a major impact on the chemical and organoleptic characteristics of the milk.

Given its geographical, soil and climate conditions, the geographical area has never been - and will never be - suitable for growing cereals such as maize or oilseed crops such as soya from which to obtain protein feedstuffs. As it is not possible to substitute these feedstuffs with high-quality fodder from within the area, the use of complementary concentrates and feedstuffs from outside it must be allowed. These products are easily broken down and dissolved in the rumen (grain size smaller than 0.8 cm, i.e. incapable of stimulating ruminal contractions) so they provide energy (mainly from reserve carbohydrates such as starch) and readily available protein for the rumen microbiome. However, as their role is limited to the physiological function of supporting the microbiome, they have no impact at all on the properties of the milk or of the mozzarella. Therefore, it is the compulsory grazing for the time it is actually possible (150 days), and the diet rich in fodder produced in the area, which are the aspects of the diet that help determine the chemical and sensory properties of the raw material and of the finished product. These are therefore two fundamental elements linking the raw material, the finished product and the territory.

Only raw whole cow's milk, collected over two separate milking sessions, is used to make this cheese. The milk may be thermised or pasteurised.

The cheese is made according to the traditional practice of using a whey starter culture.

The milk used to make 'Mozzarella di Gioia del Colle' comes from herds of cattle belonging to the Bruna [Brown], Frisona [Friesian], Pezzata Rossa [Red Pied] or Jersey breeds and crosses thereof, where at least 60 % of the total dry matter fed to the dairy cows is grass and/or hay from meadows offering a wide variety of vegetation.

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

All of the stages of the production process - rearing and milking the cows, collecting and processing the milk, and making the cheese itself - take place in the geographical area described in point 4.

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

'Mozzarella di Gioia del Colle' may be marketed in packages of various weights and/or in individual portions. It is marketed immersed in preservative liquid (water, possibly with added salt and slightly acidified).

As it is a fresh product that tends to deteriorate rapidly, 'Mozzarella di Gioia del Colle' must be packaged on the same premises at which it is made, within the geographical area defined under point 4.

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

The logo (Figure 1) must be printed on the packaging used to market 'Mozzarella di Gioia del Colle'.

The logo shown in Figure 1 must be displayed prominently on the upper face of the labelling or packaging, as well as on the sides. The logo shown in Figure 1 must be displayed on both sides of single wrapped portions.

Figure 1

Logo



4. Concise definition of the geographical area

The production area spans the municipalities of Acquaviva delle Fonti, Alberobello, Altamura, Casamassima, Cassano delle Murge, Castellana Grotte, Conversano, Gioia del Colle, Gravina in Puglia, Locorotondo, Monopoli, Noci, Putignano, Sammichele di Bari, Santeramo in Colle and Turi in the Province of Bari; Castellaneta, Crispiano, Laterza, Martina Franca, Massafra and Mottola in the Province of Taranto; and a portion of the municipality of Matera lying adjacent to the municipalities of Altamura, Santeramo in Colle and Laterza, demarcated by the SS 99 and SS 7 trunk roads.

5. Link with the geographical area

The geographical area where this cheese is produced spans parts of the provinces of Bari and Taranto on the Murge plateau, where there are many dairy farms (the 'cow farms' of Frederician origin). In this area, where farms and dairies are located quite close together (many even on the same premises), it has long been the local custom to produce mozzarella from cow's milk: there are references dating from 1885 to the "exquisite mozzarella from Apulia" in a publication entitled *L' Italia agricola, giornale dedicato al miglioramento morale ed economico delle popolazioni rurali* ['Agricultural Italy, a journal devoted to the moral and economic betterment of rural populations'] (Redaelli, Milan). As well as for certain peculiarities of its geography, soil and climate, the area is distinctive for its ancient deep-rooted cheese-making tradition which has withstood the test of time and been passed down from one generation to the next. Both of these aspects have a profound impact on the characteristics of the milk and cheese and they are the main factors which link 'Mozzarella di Gioia del Colle' to the territory.

The chemico-physical and nutritional characteristics of the milk, in particular, are linked to the territory via the diet fed to the animals and the broader environmental context in which they are reared. It is well known that the composition of milk is generally closely linked to the zootechnical context in which the animals live and that the type of volatile compounds is very important for the composition. The aromatic characteristics of the milk depend on these substances, which are partly formed by the animal's metabolism and partly by the environment. The volatile compounds from the environment can enter the milk either via digestion (rumination) or through the lungs (inhalation). In the geographical area where 'Mozzarella di Gioia del Colle' PDO is produced, the geographical, soil and climate conditions have led to the selection of certain naturally occurring and cultivated plant varieties which are resistant to the hot, dry conditions typical of a pseudo-steppe environment. The naturally occurring vegetation is mostly xerophilous and it includes aromatic herbs such as *Thymus striatus*, *Ferula communis* and *Foeniculum vulgare*. These plants — and xerophilous vegetation in general — are particularly rich in polyphenols, terpenes, carbonyl compounds and other volatile substances that can have a direct or indirect influence on the milk's flavour. This influence is direct when they are transferred unchanged and indirect when they act as precursors for other volatile metabolites with an impact on the fragrance. The constant presence of the animals in this environment is conducive to volatile principles with aromatic properties being passed into the milk, especially at certain times of the year. On

the whole, it is the compulsory grazing and the diet rich in fodder produced in the area that guarantee the distinctive nutritional and functional characteristics of the milk, such as its lipid profile and its volatile compound content. Local environmental conditions and livestock-rearing techniques play an important role in shaping the milk microbiota. All of these factors combined have a major impact on the organoleptic characteristics of 'Mozzarella di Gioia del Colle'.

As regards the influence of the processing technique, this is the traditional, historical method which only allows for fresh milk to be used and local whey added (the starter culture). The whey starter that is added to the milk represents yet another link to the local territory, as it has been made in the same way for a very long time: using the previous day's whey which has been left to turn sour, allowing it to become enriched with the milk enzymes characteristic of the dairy. These aspects guarantee a strong link to the territory, as they determine that most of the microbiological component will also be native. The microbial component plays an important role in the sensory properties because it is responsible for the formation of the product's 'secondary aromas'. The native microbiological profile of the whey starter culture is guaranteed partly by the characteristics of the milk from which it is derived, but more importantly, by the preparation method and the environment in which it is left to develop. The 'mix of native micro-organisms' contained in the starter culture reflects all phases in the production process and is transferred on a daily basis to the milk and therefore to the finished product, thus constantly perpetuating the link to the territory. The methods used by the cheese-maker to manage the whey in the vat, mature the curds and process the mixture afterwards combine to form another distinctive link to the territory. The combination of all of the processing parameters has an impact on the microbial ecosystem, which is already quite distinctive, thus shaping how the fermentation progresses. The cheese-maker's expertise is essential in that regard as it allows the set of microbes to develop in a unique and irreplicable manner, thus giving the mozzarella its typical sensory characteristics. As far as the taste is concerned, this fermentation creates slightly sour notes with a pleasant yeasty after-taste that is stronger in freshly made cheese. The aroma derived from the cheese-making process combines with those which are derived from the milk, i.e. from the fermentation process ('secondary aroma') which creates fresh notes of milk, butter and acid whey and from the raw material ('primary aroma') with its characteristically delicate plant and animal notes. To sum up, the primary aromas reflect the conditions in which the cows were raised, with an important role played by the diet of local forage (fresh or hay) and the secondary aromas are linked to the native microbiota.

As well as the specific characteristics shaped by the techniques used in rearing the animals and making the cheese, environmental, historical and cultural influences also play a part. The landscape (Natura 2000), local geology (Apulia's Murge plateau region, with cretaceous limestone, rocky outcrops and reduced clays) and climate are all significant. In historical and cultural terms, there is a deep-rooted link between the product and the type of farming in the area: small and medium-sized livestock farms which are mostly family-run and structured according to local customs, where cattle spend long periods of time grazing. Finally, there is a great deal of evidence proving that mozzarella has featured in the history of Gioia del Colle, including a documentary produced by the Istituto Luce in Gioia del Colle on 28 August 1950. Other records show that in the early decades of the twentieth century 'a farmer named Clemente Milano rearing Alpine Brown cattle in the Gioia del Colle area was the first to use the milk from his stock to make the special fresh dairy product known as mozzarella' (from *Gioia del Colle, oggi* ['Gioia del Colle, Today'], edited by Giovanni Bozzo for Japigia Editrice, Bari 1970). A 1922 article by Giovanni Carano Donvito mentions that '….Mozzarella di Gioia (del Colle) was highly appreciated, sought-after and handsomely paid for on the market in Rome and Naples as well as in Bari, Taranto, Lecce, Foggia and other smaller cities' (*La riforma sociale* ['Social reform'], F.S. Nitti, L. Roux, L. Einaudi - Roux e Viarengo, Turin). Finally, there is evidence that a great many local events aimed at raising the profile of mozzarella have been taking place since the 1960s.

Reference to publication of the product specification

https://www.politicheagricole.it/flex/cm/pages/ServeAttachment.php/L/IT/D/1%252F8%252F2%252FD.820f2a0d5824dbf22170/P/BLOB%3AID%3D3340/E/pdf?mode=download