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 25/05)

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 NON-MINOR AMENDMENTS TO THE PRODUCT SPECIFICATION FOR A PROTECTED DESIGNATION OF ORIGIN OR PROTECTED GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATION

Application for approval of amendments in accordance with the first subparagraph of Article 53(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012

'PICODON'

EU No: PDO-FR-02130 — 16.3.2016

PDO (X) PGI ( )

1. **Applicant group and legitimate interest**

Syndicat Drôme-Ardèche de défense et de promotion du Picodon AOP

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This professional farmers' association is composed of all the operators involved in the production of 'Picodon': milk producers, including farmer-processors, processing enterprises and maturers. It therefore has a legitimate right to propose the amendments.

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 with the geographical area, inspections, national requirements

[1] OJ L 343, 14.12.2012, p. 1.

4. **Type of amendment(s)**

— ☒ Amendments to the product specification of a registered PDO or PGI not to be qualified as minor within the meaning of the third subparagraph of Article 53(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012

— ☐ Amendments to the product specification of a registered PDO or PGI for which a Single Document (or equivalent) has not been published and which cannot be qualified as minor within the meaning of the third subparagraph of Article 53(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012

5. **Amendment(s)**

Description of product

In order to better characterise the product, it has been specified that the 'Picodon' is shaped like a small puck with 'rounded edges', which is more precise. In contrast, the reference to the 'circular' character of the cheese has been removed, since this is implied by its puck-like shape.

In order to preserve the milk's natural flora and deepen the link with the geographical area of the 'Picodon', the type of milk used has been specified as follows: '[…] non-standardised and unhomogenised […] raw whole goat's milk'.

The 'Picodon' is prepared from a lactic curd obtained mainly through the activity of lactic bacteria, with little rennet used. As this characterises the cheese, the words 'obtained by coagulating whole goat's milk and adding a small amount of rennet' in the 'Method of production' section have been added to the 'Description of product' section and it has been specified that the coagulation is of the 'lactic' type.

Since the size and weight of the 'Picodon' are appraised after the maturation phase, it has been specified that these characteristics of the cheese apply at the earliest 12 days after renneting.

In order to reflect the fact that the fine rind of the 'Picodon' has varied flora, a description of its appearance, which is 'uniform or speckled, with white, ivory, blue, grey or brown colours, depending on the maturation stage' has been added. This diversity of the surface flora is particularly evident owing to the important role of farm-based processing, with each farm using a significant amount of its own lactic flora and maturing flora.

In order to specify the characteristics of the product, the 'homogenous and fine' texture is now also qualified as 'smooth'. Moreover, as the texture changes depending on the length of the maturation period, it has been indicated that the smooth texture is obtained 'when the "Picodon" is young' (i.e., at the minimum maturation stage), since it had already been specified that the texture could be crumbly if matured for longer. Thus, the sentence 'The paste is white or yellow in colour, with an even and fine texture, giving a clean cut, though it can become crumbly if matured for longer' is replaced by 'The paste is white or yellow in colour. In the mouth, the texture is homogeneous, fine and smooth, giving a clean cut when the "Picodon" is young, though it can become crumbly if matured for longer.'

The 'Picodon' may undergo a special maturation process involving alternating confinement and washing phases. Where those phases correspond to the method used originally in and around the municipality of Dieulefit, the 'Picodon' is qualified as 'matured using the Dieulefit method' ('affiné méthode Dieulefit'). This special maturation process is already described in the specification. Besides, there is a wider tradition of washing the cheeses and confining them to a closed space, which had not previously been codified in the specification and which has now been identified and explained more clearly in this specification. In order to inform consumers better, a new qualification has been added to the specification for these cheeses: 'matured and washed' ('affiné lavé'). Cheeses obtained with the 'matured using the Dieulefit method' ('affiné méthode Dieulefit') or 'matured and washed' ('affiné lavé') washing and confinement techniques have similar characteristics, which are already described in the specification. Consequently the part of the sentence 'When the "Picodon" undergoes a special maturation process known as "affiné méthode Dieulefit" ("matured using the Dieulefit method")' has become 'When the "Picodon" undergoes a special maturation process known as "matured and washed" ("affiné lavé") or "matured using the Dieulefit method" ("affiné méthode Dieulefit")' and the rest of the sentence is unchanged: the resulting cheese has the following characteristics when it leaves the maturation plant: diameter: 4,5 to 6 cm, height: 1,3 cm to 2,5 cm, minimum weight: 45 g.

In order to improve the characterisation of the product, the aromas and tastes of the different forms of the 'Picodon' have been described more precisely using the elements of characterisation of the Institut Technique du Gruyère and the work of the committee in charge of organoleptic examination (which has participated in the inspection of the product for the past 20 years): 'the taste is […] capric with notes of nut, light notes of mushroom and occasional pungency but without excessive salinity or acidity. When the "Picodon" is "matured and washed" ("affiné lavé") or "matured using the Dieulefit method" ("affiné méthode Dieulefit"), it may also have a fermentative taste.'

Proof of origin

Owing to developments in national legislation and regulations, the text of the 'Evidence that the product originates from the defined geographical area' section has been consolidated to bring together, in particular, provisions on declaration requirements and the keeping of registers for tracing products and monitoring production conditions.

In particular, in this context provisions on authorising operators are included to ensure that they are able to meet the requirements of the specification for the designation from which they wish to benefit. Inspection of the PDO specification 'Picodon' takes place according to an inspection plan drawn up by an inspection body.

That section has also been extended to include several provisions on registers and declaration documents, enabling traceability to be guaranteed and ensuring that product compliance with the requirements of the specification is monitored.

Method of production

Management of the flock:

The definition of 'flock' has been added to specify the types of animals subject to the rules laid down hereinafter and the method of calculating the rations: a flock consists of all the dairy goats over 1 year old present on the farm on 1 January.

The term 'animals of local stock' has been clarified: they are breeds from south-eastern France, which remain well represented in the geographical area, such as the Massif Central, Provençale and Rove breeds.

The term 'management in line with local customary practice' has been deleted and replaced with more precise provisions as described below.

It has been confirmed that the permanent confinement of the flock is prohibited and it has been specified that as soon as weather conditions allow, the flock is put out to graze in a pasture or a run or at least provided with an exercise yard to which the entire flock has permanent access. These concepts of pasture and runs have been introduced so as to better reflect local rearing practices. In addition, the minimum requirements for the exercise area have now been described (at least 5 m^2 per animal, with access to water and shade).

Feeding of the animals

Fodder:

In the registered specification, it was stated that at least 80 % of the basic ration consisted of fodder or cereals from the geographical area. That provision is ambiguous, because it does not correspond to the definition of 'basic ration', which usually covers the fodder, either grazed or given to the animals and possibly supplemented with low-energy feed.

In order to be consistent with the usual definition of both 'basic ration' and 'supplementary feed', the provision has been split into two, with, on the one hand, fodder, 100 % of which must come from the geographical area and, on the other, supplementary feed, where 100 % of any unprocessed cereals must come exclusively from the geographical area. This provision as well as the 390-kg limit to the quantity of supplementary feed per milk goat per year, which has been added to the specification, ensures that at least 67 % of the feed in the total ration (basic ration and feed supplements) comes from the geographical area. Taking into account the goat's average annual intake of 1 200 kg and the fact that the share of supplementary feed is limited to 390 kg (or 33 %), the share of fodder (810 kg) means that at least approximately 67 % of the total comes exclusively from the geographical area.

In order to ensure that the flock's feed is essentially fodder and that a significant proportion of the feed comes from the geographical area, it has been specified that:

— the basis of the flock's feed consists of fodder that has been grazed or given to the animals (the other feed, including the cereals and dehydrated fodder, are classified as 'feed supplements' and limited in quantity),

— 100 % of this fodder must come from the geographical area.

In order to avoid the use of any fermented feed available on the farm for other animals, it has been specified that such feed must be inaccessible to all the animals in the farm's goat flock.

The fodder has been defined in accordance with a positive list (all plants consumed by the goats on grassland, in runs, on heathland and in undergrowth and composed of spontaneous annual or perennial, arboreal, shrubby or herbaceous species; the flora of temporary or permanent grassland; annual fodder crops; fresh fruit, roots and unprocessed tubers.) in order to specify the nature of the authorised fodder and to facilitate checks.

In order to ensure that the feed of the goats truly reflects the floral richness typical of the geographical area, it has been stipulated that the annual feed ration of the goats must contain at least 12 species of plants, as this encourages the milk producers to use the grassland and, in particular, the permanent grassland.

In addition, to this same end, at least 30 % of the forage areas must be composed of runs and/or permanent grassland and/or covered areas composed of at least three species.

There are specific provisions concerning green feeding (the fodder is harvested properly, distributed promptly and consumed within 24 hours; all fodder remaining in the troughs after 24 hours will be removed.), in order to ensure the quality of the distributed feed. Furthermore, it has been specified that straw litter cannot be used as fodder.

Supplementary feed:

In order to specify the nature of the authorised feed and to facilitate checks, the authorised supplementary feed has been defined as follows:

— cereal grains whatever their form,

— unprocessed oil and pulse seeds that have been flattened, sprouted, crushed or extruded,

— derived products from the processing of cereals,

— derived products from the processing of oil seeds and pulses through physical tanning processes using essential oils and plant extracts: oilcake and soya oil, peas, field beans, lupin, linseed, rapeseed, sunflower, vetches,

— products from sugar production: dehydrated beet pulp, liquid molasses from sugar cane or beet,

— dehydrated fodder: lucerne and whole-crop maize,

— processed fruit,

— nutritional supplements, minerals.

It is now specified that all cereal grains distributed unprocessed (not as part of a compound feed) must also come from the geographical area. These cereals produced in the geographical area further strengthen the feed self-sufficiency of the local flock.

A maximum limit of 390 kg of raw material per milking goat per year has been set for compound feed (corresponding to around 30 % of the ration) in order to maximise the consumption of fodder from the area. In addition, the maximum limit for dehydrated fodder has been lowered: '150 kg of raw material' instead of '20 % of the feed', which corresponded to approximately 240 kg. Furthermore, the indication 'except in exceptional circumstances', which qualified the limit for dehydrated fodder, has been deleted, since it was not appropriate.

The role of whey from the farm has been clarified as follows: even though, according to traditional practices, whey from the farm may be used in the feed of the animals, it is not included when calculating the amount of distributed supplements.

With a view to guaranteeing perfect-quality feed for the animals, it is prohibited to distribute feed damaged by the storage conditions.

Fertilising the forage areas:

The rules on applying fertiliser in the land parcels used to grow the goats' feed have been clarified, as organic fertiliser may modify the composition of the flora of the pasture land:

'The only organic fertilisers authorised are compost or digestates, manure, slurry, liquid manure (of agricultural origin) as well as organic fertilisers of non-agricultural origin, such as sewage sludge (or by-products), and green waste.

Each application of non-agricultural organic fertiliser must be accompanied by analytical monitoring on a batch-by-batch basis (lorry-load, tankful, etc.) of pathogenic germs, heavy metals, and organic trace compounds covered by the legislation.

Applying non-agricultural organic manure is authorised on farm land, provided it is covered over immediately and done in compliance with the legislation in force with regard to the specific restrictions (dates, protected areas, etc.), quantities, etc.'

Ban on the use of GMOs (feed and cultivation):

Banning GMOs in the goats' diet makes it possible to maintain the link to the land and enhance the traditional nature of the feed.

Cheese processing

Production of milk:

The provision stating that the milk used must comply with the health standards in force has been removed from the specification, because they fall outside the scope of the PDO.

The rules regarding the composition of the milk (minimum fat content of 28 g/l and minimum protein content of 25 g/l) have been removed, because the milk used is non-standardised, unhomogenised whole milk. These latter clarifications have been explicitly added to the definition of the milk used.

The possibility of heat-treating the milk in the case of 'dairy'-type processing has been removed, and therefore all operators are required to use raw milk. This makes it possible to take better account of the original flora of locally produced milk and consequently affects the flora and organoleptic characteristics of the cheeses. Certain cheese-makers who lodged an opposition relating to that provision during the national opposition period and fulfil the conditions of Article 15(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012 have been granted a transitional period ending on 31 December 2016.

Renneting and curdling:

The concept of curdling has been replaced by the more precise concept of renneting (renneting takes place at a certain point in time, while curdling lasts for several hours).

For organisational reasons, the processing units are not always able to rennet the milk until 18 hours after its delivery. Modern milk preservation technology makes such a wait possible without it causing any production problems or alterations to the product characteristics. This new maximum period of 18 hours (rather than the original 6 hours) has therefore been introduced for production plants outside the farm.

In order to facilitate the self-checks made by farm producers, in particular, the acidity at the end of the curdling process can be expressed in several ways. The timeframe for coagulation (curdling) has been reduced from an interval of 12 to 48 hours to an interval of 16 to 36 hours, as this reflects the practices better and also ensures slow curdling. It has been specified that the curd is of the lactic type, because it is possible to determine empirically, by observing the texture of the curd, whether or not acidification has taken place properly.

Moulding, draining:

Thanks to technical progress, it is now possible to mould the curds using multi-moulds: consequently, a provision on this possibility has been added to the specification. This helps to lighten the heavy work of moulding. Nonetheless, the moulding must be done manually, in a careful manner, and therefore the words 'taking care not to break them' have been added, as this is important for the drainage and the desired final texture.

The size of each mould of the multi-mould is slightly different from that of individual moulds, because they are perfectly cylindrical, while individual moulds are slightly conical. The entire multi-mould must be turned over to ensure that the cheese has a symmetrical shape, but with individual moulds each cheese is turned over by hand.

Consequently the sizes of the two types of moulds have been specified in line with the shape and size of the 'Picodon' after maturation: size of the interior of an individual mould (lower diameter: 74 mm, upper diameter: 87 mm, minimum height: 60 mm), and of multi-moulds (lower diameter: 78 mm, upper diameter: 78 mm).

Moreover, it appears that the specification contained a minor error in the size of individual moulds (lower diameter: 76 mm, upper diameter: 85 mm). The sizes have been corrected and replaced with those shown above, as they are the ones that result in the desired shape of the cheese.

Both sides of the cheese must be salted, though this requirement does not amend the registered specification. However, the clarification 'salted at least once on one side during drainage' has been deleted, since salting at the time of removal from the mould has not been found to affect the characteristics of the finished product. The provision is now worded as follows: 'Salting is done at the latest at the time of removal from the mould'.

Drying:

Before actually placing the cheese in the drying room, the cheese may be drained after removal from the mould, in order to obtain fresh cheeses that can be dried properly and to facilitate the growth of surface flora. The possibility of draining the cheese has therefore been introduced.

Maturation:

The possibility of cooling the cheeses at a temperature above 0 °C during the drying and maturation stages has been added to the specification. This makes it possible to slow down the development of certain batches of cheese. In order to ensure the sufficient maturation of the cheeses and preserve their final characteristics, it has been specified, however, that these cooling periods are not included in the minimum maturation period.

Since the 'Picodon' may be matured in the conventional manner or by washing it, the two methods have been described separately for the sake of better clarity:

— As regards the maturation of the unwashed cheeses, the precise humidity percentage of the maturation room has been replaced with the concept of a 'humid atmosphere' and the maximum maturation temperature has been removed, because balancing these two criteria depends solely on the cheesemakers' own know-how. Furthermore, it is difficult to precisely measure the humidity level in a farm-based processing plant. The minimum maturation temperature and the minimum duration of this phase, which are the two key parts of this process, remain unchanged.

  In the registered specification, it was specified that the cheese could not be marketed until 14 days after renneting. This time was reduced to 12 days for several reasons:

  — the initial time of 14 days could include periods in cold storage, without the cheese developing. Now it is specified clearly that any cooling period is not included when calculating the maturation period of the cheese. Therefore it is possible to market the 'Picodon' after 12 days without reducing its level of maturation,

  — the duration of the actual drying and maturation phases, which are crucial to the final product's level of maturation, have not been changed: consequently this reduction does not affect the cheese's characteristics,

  — to underline this, a description of the state of the cheese when it leaves the maturation plant has been added: in order to ensure sufficient maturing and drying ('the surface of the cheese no longer feels humid to the touch') and a good implantation of the surface flora ('the surface flora have become implanted').

— As regards the maturing of the washed cheeses, the cheeses must first be confined to a closed space for 15 days at a temperature of between 5 to 10 °C. These provisions were included in the original description of the 'Dieulefit method' and have been extended to cover all 'matured and washed' 'Picodon' cheeses. The clarification whereby the confinement must take place 'in a box' has been deleted: the cheese may also be placed in another type of container, for example earthenware jars, in accordance with ancient tradition. The reference to a humidity level has been removed and replaced with the concept of a 'humid space', as explained above.

  It has been specified that the cheese must be blue after this first confinement (i.e., covered in blue moulds).

  For 'matured and washed' 'Picodon' cheeses, the next part of the process consists of several washing and confinement phases: this has been indicated in this chapter, as has the minimum maturation period of 30 days (which is the same for 'Picodon' 'matured using the Dieulefit method').

Specific labelling details

The requirement to use the indication or the national abbreviation of the designation of origin has been replaced by the requirement to affix the European Union's PDO symbol.

It has been laid down that the labelling of the cheeses includes a part common to all operators using the same graphic charter (the name 'Picodon' is written in a half-circle, in a stylised form, so as to give the 'Picodon' PDO better visibility at points of sale). The operator may freely design the rest of the label. Any operator complying with the specification may obtain the sample label, without restriction, simply by requesting it from the group.

It has been added that the indications 'matured and washed' or 'matured using the Dieulefit method' are used whenever the relevant provisions are applied.

Furthermore, it has been specified that the font size of the producer's and/or maturer's name is at least as big as that of the packager's identifier.

It has been laid down that each unit for sale to the consumer includes a label. Nevertheless, the following provision applies to direct selling (selling at markets, in particular): possibility of using a sign and distributing labels at each sales event.

Finally, it has been stipulated that the use of any qualifying term or other reference accompanying the designation of origin is prohibited on the label, in marketing material, on invoices and in commercial documents, with the exception of the above-mentioned indications and the information provided for by general legislation, brand names or trademarks. This ensures that the label of the 'Picodon' PDO does not contain segments that have not been provided for by the specification or legislation.

Other

The section 'Details bearing out the link with the geographical area' has been supplemented to better highlight the link between the product and its geographical area. Therefore excessively detailed descriptions of the natural environment not related to the product itself have been removed, as have any unclear elements and anecdotes. In addition, information about traditional and current know-how has been added, including the maturation and washing techniques applicable to 'Picodon' qualified as 'matured and washed' or 'matured using the Dieulefit method'. The link between natural and human factors and the specificities of the product have been laid down more clearly. Finally, this part has been organised in a more logical manner. The part 'References to the inspection body' has been updated by adding the contact details of the certifying body and amending the contact details of the competent authorities.

In the light of changes to national legislation and rules, the 'National requirements' section now contains a table indicating the main points to be checked, their reference values and the evaluation methods to be used.

Finally, the contact details of the group have been updated.

SINGLE DOCUMENT

'PICODON'

EU No: PDO-FR-02130 — 16.3.2016

PDO (X) PGI ( )

1. **Name(s)**

'Picodon'

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*

The 'Picodon' is a cheese shaped like a small puck with rounded edges.

It is a non-standardised and unhomogenised, unpressed soft cheese obtained by lactic coagulation of raw whole goat's milk, to which a small quantity of rennet has been added. It contains at least 45 g of fat per 100 g of cheese after total desiccation and it must contain at least 40 g of dry matter per 100 g of cheese.

When the 'Picodon' is unwashed, it is marketed starting 12 days after renneting. At the end of the maturation phase, it has the following characteristics: diameter: 5 to 7 cm, height: 1,8 cm to 2,5 cm, minimum weight: 60 g.

It has a fine rind that is lightly covered with uniform or speckled white, ivory, blue, grey or brown moulds, depending on the maturation stage.

The paste is white or yellow in colour. In the mouth, the texture is homogeneous, smooth and fine, giving a clean cut when the 'Picodon' is young, though it can become crumbly if matured for longer.

When the 'Picodon' undergoes a special maturation process, characterised by confinement and washing phases, it is qualified as 'matured and washed' or 'matured using the Dieulefit method'. The resulting cheese has the following characteristics when it leaves the maturation plant: diameter: 4,5 to 6 cm, height: 1,3 cm to 2,5 cm, minimum weight: 45 g.

The surface is white, ivory, grey or light cream with slight traces of colour. When cut, the paste has a marbled appearance. In the mouth, the texture is homogeneous, fine and smooth. The marketing of 'Picodon' qualified as 'matured and washed' or 'matured using the Dieulefit method' may not take place earlier than 30 days after renneting.

Regardless of the maturation method, the taste is frank, capric with notes of nut, light notes of mushroom and occasional pungency but without excessive salinity or acidity. When the 'Picodon' is 'matured and washed' or 'matured using the Dieulefit method', it may also have a fermentative taste.

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

Raw material: raw whole goat's milk, non-standardised and unhomogenised.

Feed:

Fodder:

The basis of the flock's diet consists of fodder that has been grazed or given to the animals.

The feed contains no silage products or other fermented fodder.

The fodder is composed of: all plants consumed by the goats, the flora of temporary or permanent grassland, annual fodder crop, fresh fruit, roots and unprocessed tubers.

The annual feed ration of the flock must contain at least 12 species of plants. At least 30 % of the forage areas used must include a minimum of three plant species.

Supplementary feed:

All of the cereal grains distributed unprocessed (possibly flattened, crushed or sprouted) come from the geographical area.

Feed that could have an adverse influence on the odour or taste of the milk or that presents a risk of bacteriological contamination has been banned.

The quantity of supplementary feed may not exceed 390 kg per milking goat per year, including a maximum of 150 kg of dehydrated fodder per goat per year.

The supplementary feed consists of:

— cereal grains whatever their form,

— unprocessed oil and pulse seeds that have been flattened, sprouted, crushed or extruded,

— derived products from the processing of cereals,

— derived products from the processing of oil seeds and pulses through physical tanning processes using essential oils and plant extracts: oilcake and soya oil, peas, field bean, lupin, linen, rapeseed, sunflower, vetches,

— products from sugar production: dehydrated beet pulp, liquid molasses from sugar cane or beet,

— dehydrated fodder: lucerne and whole-crop maize,

— processed fruit,

— nutritional supplements, minerals.

Origin of the feed:

100 % of the fodder comes from the geographical area, as do all of the cereals distributed unprocessed.

Supplementary feed other than unprocessed cereals is not sourced entirely from within the geographical area, because the livestock farms use commercially available compound feed without any guarantee of its geographical origin.

This feed is limited to 390 kg of raw material per milking goat per year. In other words, at least 67 % of the ration of the milking goats comes from the geographical area.

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

The steps from the production of the milk up to the maturing of the cheeses take place in the geographical area.

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

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

Irrespective of the regulatory references applicable to all the cheeses, each unit for sale to the consumer is marketed under an individual label bearing:

— a part common to all the operators showing: the designation of origin in characters at least two-thirds the size of the largest characters used on the label as well as the words 'matured and washed' or 'matured using the Dieulefit method' whenever the provisions on the use of these indications are applied,

— a part that may be designed individually by each operator and also includes the European Union's PDO logo.

The font size of the producer's and/or maturer's name is at least as big as that of the packager's identifier.

The common part of the label and, where applicable, the sign comply with the graphic charter defined in the annex to the specification.

In the case of direct sales by the producer or any person under their direct responsibility, individual labelling of each sales unit is not mandatory; the above information must simply appear on a sign.

The use of any qualifying term or other reference accompanying the designation of origin is prohibited on the label, in marketing material, on invoices and in commercial documents, with the exception of the indications mentioned above or provided for by general legislation, brand names or trademarks.

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

The 'Picodon' is a cheese produced on the hills rising above the two banks of the mid-Rhône valley. The geographical area extends over the territory of the following municipalities:

— Department of Ardèche: all municipalities,

— Department of Drôme: all municipalities,

— Department of Gard: canton of Barjac: all municipalities,

— Department of Vaucluse: canton of Valréas: all municipalities.

5. **Link with the geographical area**

Ardèche and Drôme, which form the main part of the geographical area, consist largely of arid hills and mountains that dominate the mid-Rhône valley and are the preferred region for goat rearing. The natural conditions prevailing in these areas (scarcity of water, absence of flat land, patchwork parcels, poor soils, relatively dry and windy climate) have contributed to the maintenance of mixed farming.

The geographical area is a region with a transitional type of climate, ranging from a Mediterranean climate in the south to a semi-continental Lyon-type of climate in the north and a mountainous climate in the east and west.

It is characterised by a strong feed autonomy and the grassland's great floral diversity. Ligneous plants (broom, heather, etc.) are also well represented in the runs used by the goats.

As regards human factors, as long ago as 1600 Olivier de Serres described the important role of goats in this region in his work *Le Théâtre d'agriculture et mésnage des champs* ('The Theatre of Agriculture and the Tending of the Fields'). For a very long time, Drôme and Ardèche were among the leading goat-rearing departments in France (as from 1866, they were, respectively, in 1st and 3rd place).

Originally the 'Picodon' was reserved almost exclusively for consumption by the farmer's household.

As milk production tails off in the autumn and winter, cheese making used to be the only way of preserving the milk. The fact that cheese consumption was spread out meant that the 'Picodon' had different stages of maturity.

The cheese could be consumed barely dry, after maturing for only a very short time: this is the origin of the 'Picodon' with a short maturation period.

In contrast, during the winter, 'Picodon' cheeses were preserved in jars. Every 15 days the cheese was removed from the jar and washed. In this way, the cheese could be kept for a long time, taking on characteristic smells and flavours. It is a variant of the 'matured and washed' and 'matured using the Dieulefit method' maturation techniques. This second name is traditionally used east of the Rhône and south of the river Drôme, where the dryness of the air makes natural drying possible, in a manner conducive to the development of native surface flora.

Owing to its particular features, the 'Picodon' made a name for itself in Drôme and Ardèche as early as the 19th century and was more recently recognised with a controlled designation of origin by a decree of 25 July 1983.

Today the 'Picodon' continues to be a cheese produced according to specific know-how inherited from its farm origin.

The authorised goat breeds include local breeds (Massif Central, Provençale, Rove), which still today are well established in the region. The basis of the flock's diet consists of fodder obtained exclusively from the geographical area and featuring a good floral variety. As soon as weather conditions allow, the flock is put out to graze in a pasture or a run or at least provided with an exercise area The quantity of the supplementary feed distributed is limited so as to encourage the consumption of fodder.

Traditionally, the milk used is raw, whole, non-standardised goat's milk.

The curds, which are obtained by lactic coagulation of the whole goat's milk and addition of a small amount of rennet, are moulded manually with no pre-draining, taking care not to break them.

The cheese must be turned over a minimum number of times during the draining phase. Both sides are salted using dry salt only.

After the cheese is removed from the mould and possibly drained, it undergoes a drying phase followed by maturation phase, which may be interspersed with periods of drying, washing and confinement.

The cheeses are not entitled to the protected designation of origin 'Picodon' until at least 12 days after renneting, when the surface of the cheese no longer feels humid to the touch and the surface flora have become well established.

When, at the end of a drying and confinement phase of at least 15 days resulting in the blueing of the cheese, the 'Picodon' undergoes one or more washing and confinement phases, it is qualified as 'matured and washed' or 'matured using the Dieulefit method'.

The 'Picodon' is characterised by:

— its shape resembling a small puck of at least 60 g, or 45 g for 'Picodon' qualified as 'matured and washed' or 'matured using the Dieulefit method',

— the texture of its paste, which is homogeneous and fine in the mouth and ranges from supple to crumbly after maturation,

— its frank taste, which is capric with notes of nut, light notes of mushroom and occasional pungency but without excessive salinity or acidity.

The surface of the cheeses may be covered with a thin layer of uniform or speckled mould or have a white, ivory, grey or light cream shade if they have been 'matured and washed' or 'refined méthode Dieulefit'.

The basin of origin of the 'Picodon' is a poor region made up of arid hills and mountains, with geological and weather conditions suitable only for the rearing of goats. This cheese continues to be made in this region and is an indispensable source of income. Goats generally use the most difficult natural areas (drier land, slopes, etc.), where cows do not thrive and intensive cultivation is not possible.

The back-up role of goat rearing, with small-scale milk production on each farm, and the importance of proper drying for this unpressed, lactic cheese are the reasons for the small size of 'Picodon'.

The production criteria are defined in such a way as to preserve the specific features of the area and enable them to be reflected in the product.

The goats producing the milk for the production of 'Picodon' are supplied fodder from the geographical area. The feed and flock management system encourages local feed production, the significant consumption of fodder characterised by floral diversity and the practice of grazing and taking the animals outdoors. This strengthens the influence of the local natural conditions on the flora of the milk and consequently on the flora and the characteristics of the cheese. This is accentuated further by the exclusive use of raw whole milk.

The fine surface flora of the cheeses is therefore very diverse, and the cheeses have a frank taste, which is capric with notes of nut, light notes of mushroom and occasional pungency.

The curdling process using a mould that respects the structure of the curd results in a paste with a homogenous and fine texture that is characteristic of the 'Picodon'. Turning over the cheese after it has been placed in the mould and dry salting both sides also means that the salt is well distributed. These processing methods, combined with the important drying and maturation phases, which contribute to the establishment of the surface flora and the development of the aromas, result in a cheese with a fine, homogeneous paste and a rich aroma.

While first smooth in the mouth, the texture of the paste becomes crumbly if matured for longer, which is not an uncommon local practice. Furthermore, a special maturation phase involving alternating confinement and washing phases confers on the 'Picodon' qualified as 'matured and washed' or 'matured using the Dieulefit method' its typical texture and aromas.

These factors make the 'Picodon' a cheese that is strongly linked to its geographical origin and has a significant regional reputation. At first this was conveyed orally, in particular through songs sung in Provençe, and from 19th century in writing, whether in in dictionaries, correspondence or books on history or gastronomy.

Reference to publication of the specification

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

https://info.agriculture.gouv.fr/gedei/site/bo-agri/document_administratif-5a38782c-cfc7-4c37-a3ee-0aee048b1664/telechargement