Publication of an application for registration of a name 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

(2023/C 280/04)

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]) within 3 months from the date of this publication.

SINGLE DOCUMENT

'Sel de l'Île de Ré' / 'Fleur de sel de l'Île de Ré'

EU No: PGI-FR-02782 — 2.7.2021

PDO ( ) PGI (X)

1. **Name(s)**

'Sel de l'Île de Ré' / 'Fleur de sel de l'Île de Ré'

2. **Member State or Third Country**

France

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

3.1. *Type of product*

Class 2.6. Salt

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

Description by product category

A - *'Sel de l'Île de Ré'*

'Sel de l'Île de Ré' in the form of crystals

Organoleptic characteristics

'Sel de l'Île de Ré' comes in the form of crystals which are not processed after collection, commonly known as coarse salt, or in the form of fine salt, in the case of crushed or sieved crystals. 'Sel de l'Île de Ré' has a grey to white colour, which varies depending on the insolubles content of the product. It may have slightly red to yellow hues due to the presence of microorganisms.

Physical characteristics

The crystals collected are mostly cubic in shape or cubic aggregates.

'Sel de l'Île de Ré' in crystal form is a salt containing grains of different sizes when collected, which may vary considerably during the production season and depending on how the salt marshes are managed.

— Grain size of 'Sel de l'Île de Ré', unprocessed, commonly known as coarse salt: at least 90 % of the salt has a grain size of less than 8 mm.

— Grain size of fine salt: at least 90 % of the salt has a grain size of less than 2 mm.

When packaged, 'Sel de l'Île de Ré' contains no hard and/or sharp extraneous matter larger than 7 mm.

Chemical characteristics

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

'Sel de l'Île de Ré' in crystal form is unrefined, unwashed and free of added substances. When packaged it has:

— an insolubles content of 0,75 g or less per 100 g of salt

— a moisture content of 10 % or less.

'Sel de l'Île de Ré' in the form of compacted salt

Organoleptic characteristics

'Sel de l'Île de Ré' in compacted form comprises compacted crystals. It has a grey to white colour, which varies depending on the insolubles content of the product. It may have slightly red to yellow hues due to the presence of microorganisms.

Physical characteristics

'Sel de l'Île de Ré' in compacted form comes in blocks of varying size and shape, weighing more than 4 g.

When packaged, 'Sel de l'Île de Ré' in compacted form contains no hard and/or sharp extraneous matter larger than 7 mm.

Chemical characteristics

'Sel de l'Île de Ré' in compacted form is unrefined, unwashed and free of added substances. When packaged it has:

— an insolubles content of 0,75 g or less per 100 g of salt

— a moisture content of 5 % or less.

B - *'Fleur de sel de l'Île de Ré'*

Organoleptic characteristics

'Fleur de sel de l'Île de Ré' is made up of light, friable crystals which are floating on the surface of the water at the time of collection.

'Fleur de sel de l'Île de Ré' is white and may have slightly red to yellow hues due to the presence of microorganisms, which fade over time.

Physical characteristics

'Fleur de sel de l'Île de Ré' crystals have mainly a hollow inverted pyramid shape.

'Fleur de sel de l'Île de Ré' contains no hard and/or sharp extraneous matter larger than 5 mm.

When packaged, 'Fleur de sel de l'Île de Ré' has a density of 0,8 or less.

Chemical characteristics

When packaged, 'Fleur de sel de l'Île de Ré' has:

— a moisture content of 8 % or less.

— an insolubles content of 0,2 g or less per 100 g of *fleur de sel*

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

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

The production and collection of 'Sel de l'Île de Ré' / 'Fleur de sel d'Île de Ré' takes place exclusively in the geographical area.

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

'Sel de l'Île de Ré' / 'Fleur de sel de l'Île de Ré' is packed in packages identified by a batch number.

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

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

The geographical area covers the following 10 municipalities:

Ars-en-Ré, Le Bois-Plage-en-Ré, La Couarde-sur-Mer, La Flotte, Loix, Les Portes-en-Ré, Rivedoux-Plage, Saint-Clément-des-Baleines, Saint-Martin-de-Ré and Sainte-Marie-de-Ré.

5. **Link with the geographical area**

'Sel de l'Île de Ré' / 'Fleur de sel de l'Île de Ré' is produced from island marine salt collected by hand following the natural evaporation of sea water which flows by gravity in a controlled way into salt marshes featuring a bed naturally composed of clay.

The characteristics of 'Sel de l'Île de Ré' / 'Fleur de sel de l'Île de Ré' and its reputation are the result of a combination of natural factors, particularly climate and morphological factors, specific to the Île de Ré, and the know-how deployed by its salt workers since the 12th century.

Ré is a relatively flat, low and sedimentary island, situated a few kilometres off La Rochelle and separating the Pertuis Breton to the north from the Pertuis d'Antioche to the south.

The Île de Ré is characterised by low limestone plateaus associated with tidal marsh areas. The Île de Ré is made up of three former islets (Ré, Ars and Loix) that form part of the Aunis limestone plateau. They were gradually joined together by sandbars, shingle and accumulated sediment in the Fier d'Ars and Fosse de Loix depressions, which formed large areas of tidal marshes. In these marshes, naturally deposited sediment accumulations, particularly during the Holocene glacial retreat, evolved over time into a type of sediment known as *terre de bri*, creating a compact grey clay called *bric* on the island. These different episodes resulted in a very low relief landscape in which the highest point does not exceed 20 metres.

The Île de Ré is located in the Atlantic Ocean, which has semi-diurnal tides. The strongest tides can reach a tidal range of between 5 and 6 metres.

The mesoclimate of the Île de Ré is characterised by high average annual sunshine (2 250 hours of sunshine per year, according to the La Rochelle meteorological station) combined with low rainfall averaging 712 mm per year over an average of 113 days of precipitation (average data at La Couarde-sur-Mer, 1981-2010, Météo France). In addition, there is little change in temperature and humidity between day and night. Ventilation is active and regular as a result of alternating sea breezes and ocean disturbances bringing stronger winds from the north-west.

To increase production areas, humans have shaped the Île de Ré by clearing or sculpting various parts of the island.

The salt marshes of the Île de Ré developed in the 12th century (1191), at the initiative of the monks of Saint-Michel-en-l'Herm, the *seigneurs* of the islands of Ars and Loix.

The salt production area continued to expand as a result of vigorous embankment building and the creation of salt marshes around the Fier, at the initiative of the prominent protestants of the Île de Ré and La Rochelle. Salt production on the Île de Ré reached a pinnacle in the mid-19th century, growing to 1 550 ha of marshes and an annual production of 31 750 tonnes, making it a cornerstone in the island's development (Tardy, 1987). The marsh area adapted for salt production currently covers around 20 % of the total area of the island. This man-made environment has a strong influence on the landscape and image of the island.

The current operation of the Île de Ré's salt marshes and the harvesting techniques are identical to the practices known when the island's salt works were at their peak (in the 19th century).

Guiding the flow of water by gravity into the salt marshes requires specific know-how and is crucial for the production of 'Sel de l'Île de Ré' / 'Fleur de sel de l'Île de Ré'. The salt workers must have a good understanding of the features of their salt marshes in order to correctly manage the water, ensure it evaporates properly and thereby optimise salt and *fleur de sel* production.

The salt workers follow ancient techniques and use traditional tools (*boguette, rouable, simoussi, souvron*, etc.) designed to maintain salt marshes, manually collect salt, and collect *fleur de sel* on a daily basis.

'Sel de l'Île de Ré' is characterised by a grey to white colour and may have slightly yellow to red hues. At the time they are collected, most of the crystals are cubic in shape, and are mainly sold in this form, although they may be crushed, sieved or compacted.

'Fleur de sel de l'Île de Ré' is white and may have slightly red to yellow hues, which fade over time.

It consists of light and friable crystals, mostly in the form of a hollow inverted pyramid, which are floating on the surface of the water at the time of collection.

'Sel de l'Île de Ré' / 'Fleur de sel de l'Île de Ré' is not washed or enriched.

In essence, the characteristics of 'Sel de l'Île de Ré' / 'Fleur de sel de l'Île de Ré' are the result of a combination of natural factors on the Île de Ré, and the know-how deployed by the salt and *fleur de sel* producers.

The expansion of the salt marshes on the Île de Ré, by developing and clearing marsh areas, has intensified the island's original mesoclimate, which is specific and particularly evaporative. The high level of sunshine, alternation of sea and land breezes, and limited rainfall, create favourable conditions for the production of salt and *fleur de sel*. The clay of the salt marshes, which is an impermeable material, allows heat from the sun to be reflected, improving the efficiency of the concentration basins. This particularly hard clay is the reason for the low insolubles content, which affects the particular shade of the salt (grey to white). Red to yellow hues, which are sometimes present, are related to the presence of microorganisms specific to the environment.

Salt workers learned how to handle environmental conditions by developing specific know-how relating to land development, water management within the marshland, the use of specific tools and the rhythm of collection. This salt production know-how of the Île de Ré is part of a long line of traditions and contributes to the characteristics of this salt. The salt marshes, which have a bed naturally composed of clay, have been shaped to capture the sea water naturally and regulate its flow by gravity. Salt workers manage the flow of seawater, from the *vasais* [basins] to the *aires saunantes* [salt-producing areas], encouraging the evaporation and crystallisation of sea water to obtain salt and *fleur de sel*.

When collected by hand, 'Sel de l'Île de Ré' contains grains of different sizes. This high degree of diversity, which is characteristic of a salt collected by hand according to the traditional know-how of Atlantic salt producers, leads to a higher upper limit for grain size than most salts harvested mechanically.

In addition to the specific atmospheric conditions (light wind, sun, and absence of moisture or rain), the production of *fleur de sel* requires expert knowledge of water conditions and even more precise collection techniques. A thin layer of water is needed so that the *fleur de sel* can float freely on the surface and be collected with care.

Together, the physical and climate conditions of the environment and the know-how of the salt workers make it possible to produce and collect a salt and *fleur de sel* which, thanks to their inherent characteristics, do not require washing or enrichment.

For over 800 years, salt production has been a pillar of the economy of the Île de Ré, in both regional and more long-distance trade. A number of historical accounts, from the 15th century to the French Revolution and again in the early 20th century, refer to salt production on the Île de Ré and its national and international trade.

Every year, 'Sel de l'Île de Ré' is the subject of media coverage in the press and on television (*Sud-Ouest* 1986, *Le Figaro* 2012, France 3 2017, etc.).

'Fleur de sel de l'Île de Ré' is also mentioned in many media outlets (*The New York Times* 2012, *Le Point* 2017, France Inter 2021, etc.). It features in local recipe books, in particular Bahic's *Le sel de l'Île de Ré* (2015).

Finally, since the revival of salt production at the end of the 20th century, 'Sel de l'Île de Ré' / 'Fleur de sel de l'Île de Ré' has undergone significant development.

This reputation goes beyond French borders, as 'Sel de l'Île de Ré' / 'Fleur de sel de l'Île de Ré' is exported to Europe but also to North and South America, Asia and certain Middle Eastern countries. Media articles testify to this international journey, including *Sud-Ouest* 1987, *The New York Times* 2012, and *ARD* 2021.

Reference to publication of the specification

https://extranet.inao.gouv.fr/fichier/CDC-SFdSRe2211.pdf