C/2024/1214

30.1.2024

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

(C/2024/1214)

This publication confers the right to oppose the amendment 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.

APPLICATION FOR A UNION AMENDMENT TO THE PRODUCT SPECIFICATION OF A PROTECTED DESIGNATION OF ORIGIN OR PROTECTED GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATION ORIGINATING IN A MEMBER STATE

(Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012)

' Dehesa de Extremadura '

EU No: PDO-ES-0076-AM01- 1.6.2023

PDO (X) PGI ( )

1. **Name of product**

'Dehesa de Extremadura'

2. **Applicant group and legitimate interest**

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The proposal to amend the product specification for PDO 'Dehesa de Extremadura' was agreed at a plenary meeting of the Regulatory Board (Consejo Regulador). The Regulatory Board for PDO 'Dehesa de Extremadura' acted within its remit, which encompasses 'proposing amendments to the specification', in accordance with Article 16(2)(g) of Law 4/2010 of 28 April 2010 on regulatory boards for designations of origin and geographical indications pertaining to agri-food quality in Extremadura, and taking into account Article 52(1) of Law 6/2015 of 24 March 2015 on agriculture in Extremadura. The plenary assembly is also the collegial governing body of the Regulatory Board, whose powers include adopting that proposal, in accordance with Article 10(4)(f) of the existing Regulation governing PDO 'Dehesa de Extremadura' (Decree 77/2018 of 5 June 2018).

3. **Member State to which the geographical area belongs**

Spain

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

☐ Name of product

☒ Link

☐ Marketing restrictions

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

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

The approved amendments, which apply only to the certification of pure-bred Iberian pigs, correspond to Union amendments provided for in Article 53(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council, amended by Regulation (EU) No 2021/2117, allowing classification as a Union amendment since the changes entail 'further restrictions on the marketing of the product'.

6. **Amendment(s)**

1. Link

According to the letter from the president of the Regulatory Board (Consejo Regulador), the proposed 'Union amendment' is limited to 'the breed percentage of the raw material from which the protected products originate', with the aim of protecting 'only pure-bred Iberian pig products'.

This entails the following changes:

Product specification, section B (Description of the product), so that 'hams and shoulders exclusively come from pure-bred Iberian pigs', removing the possibility of originating from pigs with a minimum of 75 % Iberian breed. This change requires others to be made in this same paragraph and for this sole purpose. For example, the elimination of the current four classes of sales denominations and their replacement by only two: Class I (Pure-bred Iberian acorn-fed hams and shoulders) and Class II (Pure-bred Iberian pastured, fodder-fattened hams and shoulders).

Similarly, again with the sole aim of ensuring that hams and shoulders come from only pure-bred Iberian pigs, a paragraph of section D(b) (Checks and certification), which refers to the breed percentage, needs to be amended.

Summary of the reasons for which the amendment is required

According to the letter from the president of the Regulatory Board, the proposal for a 'Union amendment' is limited to 'the breed percentage of the raw material from which the protected products originate', with the aim of protecting 'only pure-bred Iberian pig products', thereby increasing the 'excellence' of the product.

In line with the proposed changes to the product specification, sections 3.2 (Product description) and 3.3 (Feed) need to be amended accordingly.

SINGLE DOCUMENT

' Dehesa de Extremadura '

EU No: PDO-ES-0076-AM01- 1.6.2023

PGI ( ) PDO (X)

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

'Dehesa de Extremadura'

2. **Member State**

Spain

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

3.1. *Type of product*

Class 1.2. Meat products (cooked, salted, smoked, etc.)

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

Hams and shoulder hams covered by the PDO 'Dehesa de Extremadura' must have the following characteristics:

Physical characteristics:

External appearance: elongated, stylised, profile typical of the serrano 'V' cut, with trotter.

Weight: at least 5,75 kg for hams and 4 kg for shoulder hams.

Organoleptic characteristics:

Colour and appearance when cut: characteristic colour ranging from pink to purplish red, marbled appearance when cut.

Flavour and aroma: delicately flavoured meat, not very salty or sweet. Characteristic and pleasant aroma.

Texture: not very fibrous.

Fat: glossy, yellowish white in colour, aromatic, with a pleasant taste. Its consistency varies according to the proportion of acorns in the diet.

Physical-chemical characteristics:

Dehydration index: maximum water content of 50 % at the surface and 55 % at the core.

Sodium chloride: maximum 5 %.

Sales descriptions:

Depending on the animals' classification and diet, hams and shoulder hams are classified as follows:

Class I: Pure-bred Iberian acorn-fed ham: this comes from pure-bred Iberian pigs which have been fed in accordance with the dietary requirements set out in the product description under paragraph (a) for acorn-fed or mast-finished pigs.

Pure-bred Iberian acorn-fed shoulder ham: this comes from pure-bred Iberian pigs which have been fed in accordance with the dietary requirements set out in the product description under paragraph (a) for acorn-fed or mast-finished pigs.

Class II: Pure-bred Iberian pastured, fodder-fattened ham: this comes from pure-bred Iberian pigs which have been fed in accordance with the dietary requirements set out in the product description under paragraph (b) for pastured, fodder-fattened pigs.

Pure-bred Iberian pastured, fodder-fattened shoulder ham: this comes from pure-bred Iberian pigs which have been fed in accordance with the dietary requirements set out in the product description under paragraph (b) for pastured, fodder-fattened pigs.

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

Extremadura is traditionally a livestock-farming region with extensive dehesa, which consists of grassland and open (holm and cork) oak woodland. It is the natural habitat of the Iberian breed of pig, which feeds on acorns, grasses and other natural resources of the dehesa. The environment, the acorn-based diet and the breed are all factors that combine to ensure that the fully grown and fully fattened pig reaches the peak of its development and produces an exquisite product with exceptional characteristics.

A key and fundamental factor which determines the quality of the Iberian pigs that will be used to produce PDO 'Dehesa de Extremadura' hams and shoulder hams and the subsequent organoleptic quality of the protected products is the traditional production system, in which the pigs are fed and managed under an extensive farming system during the final fattening stage, making use of the natural resources of the dehesa, i.e. acorns, grasses, natural pastures and stubble. It is during this final stage that the pigs gain the most weight.

Prior to this stage, the traditional farming system for Iberian pigs in Extremadura allows the pigs to feed on natural resources for most of the year. The long life cycle of the pigs and the sustainability of the dehesa agroforestry system necessarily depend on the pigs being allowed to range over large areas, feeding largely on natural pastures and at times of the year, such as autumn, winter and spring, when those resources are plentiful. This applies to both acorn-fed pigs and pastured, fodder-fattened pigs, but the latter's diet requires supplementation with feed during the final fattening stage.

The supplementary feed used for pastured, fodder-fattened pigs is usually made from a mixture of 75-85 % grains and 5-15 % legumes. The grains consist primarily of wheat, barley and maize, which are traditionally farmed in the geographical area, in proportions that can vary between 15 % and 55 % for each one. The main legumes are peas and soya.

The traditional grazing required by the pig-rearing and fattening system and the fact that only the odd component such as soya, which makes up only a small percentage of the feed, is not produced in the area ensures that, of the total dry solids consumed, the percentage that comes from the geographical area is above the threshold laid down by the applicable legislation.

The fore and hind legs of the animals to be used to make PDO 'Dehesa de Extremadura' hams and shoulder hams must come from:

a) Acorn-fed or mast-finished pigs: these pigs are intended for slaughter immediately after feeding exclusively on a diet of acorns, grasses and other natural resources of the dehesa without any supplementary feed. The pigs must have an average weight of between 92 kg and 115 kg at the start of the mast-feeding period and must gain at least 52 kg on this diet without any other type of feed, spending a minimum of over 60 days on the dehesa before being slaughtered at an age of at least 14 months. Individual carcasses must weigh at least 110 kg.

b) Pastured, fodder-fattened pigs: these pigs are raised on extensive holdings, fattened on a diet of feed consisting primarily of grains and legumes and finished by feeding on pasture for at least 90 days before slaughter. Feeding and drinking troughs must be more than 100 m apart and the stocking density must be no more than 15 pigs per hectare. The minimum age at slaughter is 12 months. Individual carcasses must weigh at least 110 kg.

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

The pigs must be reared and fattened and the hams and shoulder hams must be processed within the geographical area defined in point 4.

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

PDO 'Dehesa de Extremadura' hams and shoulder hams may be presented for sale boneless, in slices or in portions, provided that they are packaged and their origin can be identified. This operation may be carried out by undertakings that have accepted and comply with the protocol laid down by the Regulatory Board in order to guarantee the traceability, origin, identification and final quality of the product.

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

Protected hams and shoulder hams must have an identification label bearing the words 'D.O.P "Dehesa de Extremadura"' and the product class, as well as the logo shown in point 3.6 of the single document.

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

The production area for the raw material consists of holm and/or cork oak dehesa, which is present in all the municipalities that make up the Autonomous Community of Extremadura, comprising the provinces of Cáceres and Badajoz, which constitute the geographical area for this PDO.

The product is made and matured in exactly the same area in which the raw material is produced, namely the Autonomous Community of Extremadura.

5. **Link with the geographical area**

Specificity of the geographical area

Natural factors: with approximately a million hectares of dehesa, Extremadura is an ecological paradise, as it has one of the best-preserved ecosystems in Europe, where livestock breeds (Iberian pigs, merino sheep, retinto cattle, etc.) live side by side with the wild animals which have found refuge there.

The region of Extremadura is located to the west of the southern part of the central plateau. It consists of the provinces of Cáceres and Badajoz, and is crossed by three mountain ranges: in the north, the Sistema Central mountain range, with the foothills of the Sierra de Gredos; in the centre, the continuation of the Toledo Mountains, between the Tagus and Guadiana river basins; and in the south, the foothills of the Sierra Morena.

The climate is continental, with moderate Atlantic influences. The annual average temperature is 16 °C to 17 °C, but temperatures can reach as high as 41 °C (in July and August) and fall as low as – 2 °C (in December and January), and the annual average rainfall is between 500 mm and 1 200 mm.

Historical factors: there are countless historical and gastronomical references to pigs in Extremadura; for example:

— The existence of zoomorphic sculptures which date from the 5th to the 2nd centuries BC and are known as 'Verracos', a name which clearly alludes to pigs. They can be found in various parts of Extremadura, such as the Ambroz Valley, the Jerte Valley, La Vera, La Jara, Campo Arañuelo, Cáceres, Botija, Santa Marta de Magasca and Madrigalejo.

— The emergence of 'butcher's shops' in the Roman villages on and around the fertile plains of the Guadiana, where suckling pig that was only one month, or 'one moon', old, as people would have said at the time, was one of the most popular food items among the better-off.

— The municipal charter of Montánchez, which dates from 1236, already contains references to dehesa dedicated exclusively to producing acorns to feed pigs.

— The municipal by-laws of Valencia de Alcántara, which were approved on 5 August 1489, refer specifically to matters relating to the Iberian pig, namely to the legal standards with which breeders, butchers and slaughtermen of Iberian pigs had to comply. These were soon extended to neighbouring municipalities, such as Alburquerque and San Vicente de Alcántara, and then to the whole of Extremadura (municipal by-laws of Torre de Don Miguel, 1534, 1564; municipal by-laws of Zafra, 1528; municipal by-laws of Cáceres, 1569, etc.).

— The chapter of Doctor Iván de Sorapán's Manual de Medicina (1616) which deals with the fertility and riches of Extremadura emphasises the high quality of its acorn-fed meat and its many hams, which were sent as far afield as the New World.

— The references to the 'consumption of more than 80 pigs a year' in Diego Martínez Abad's book Instrvccion de Vn pasajero para no errar el camino (1697), which was dedicated to the Monastery of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

— The Catastro de Ensenada (land registry) of 1752 contains the first records regarding the pig population, with specific data relating to the years between 1461 and 1785. They are held in the archives of the Monastery of Guadalupe, which is famous for its tradition of keeping herds of pigs.

— References in the folklore of Extremadura, such as the following song:

'D'Alcuescar quiero l'aceite [From Alcuescar, I want oil]

De Montánchez el jamón [From Montánchez, ham]

D'Albalá quiero centeno [From Albalá, I want rye]

De Miajadas el turrón' [From Miajadas, turrón (a type of nougat)]

Specificity of the product

Producers of 'Dehesa de Extremadura' hams and shoulder hams make them with patience and care to ensure that they reach perfection and have that unmistakeable aroma and flavour.

This involves not only the mechanics of the production process but also, and more importantly, environmental factors such as humidity, temperature, time, etc., which give the products their specific organoleptic characteristics.

Although salting is a very simple procedure, it involves a very complex process in which the salt penetrates from the surface to the core of the product and, because it is hygroscopic, forces the water towards the outer layer.

The hams and shoulder hams are then hung in chambers until the saltiness at the product's core is sufficient to prevent the development of microorganisms. As soon as the resting phase has been completed, maturing begins.

During maturation, the components of the product undergo a series of complex changes, leading to the development of its organoleptic characteristics. The hams are hung in a well-ventilated place to encourage moisture loss, after which they are moved to a room with a lower relative humidity, where conditions favour the development of their aroma, which is a very complex process, as the components of the raw material undergo numerous changes due to degradation, some of which are autolytic, while others are microbial in nature, resulting from the presence of fungal and bacterial flora. Those changes take place in an interactive manner, as the area's microclimates promote the development of a genuine ecosystem.

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

The dehesa ecosystem is an agroforestry system that allows the natural resources to be managed in a balanced and non-destructive way. This valuable environment has been preserved thanks largely to the Iberian pig, for which it forms the ideal habitat, and it is here that the raw materials for the products protected by the 'Dehesa de Extremadura' PDO are produced.

The Iberian pig is a breed well suited to this environment and has been the mainstay of a livelihood of direct consumption that has continued to this day and is now a global example of a sustainable economy, linked to a way of life in which man, the dehesa, the Iberian pig and the products derived from it have existed side by side for centuries in the same way, with the same breed and the same artisanal production method, in which the only ingredients are a unique raw material, the know-how of the artisan, salt, wind and time, as a result of which 'Dehesa de Extremadura' ham and shoulder ham are still made according to the same artisanal method as in times past.

Because of its southerly location, Extremadura has a continental climate with moderate Atlantic influences, giving it temperature and humidity conditions which influence both the production of the raw material (free-range fattening of Iberian pigs on the dehesa) and the production of the final product. The conditions are ideal for salting and maturing and give the final product specific and unique physico-chemical and organoleptic characteristics.

Reference to publication of the specification

https://www.juntaex.es/documents/77055/621148/Solicitud+modificacion+Pliego+Dehesa+Extremadura.+2022.pdf