C/2025/2033

14.4.2025

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/2025/2033)

COMMUNICATION OF APPROVAL OF A STANDARD AMENDMENT

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

'Queijo Serra da Estrela'

EU No: PDO-PT-0213-AM01 – 28.1.2025

1. **Name of product**

'Queijo Serra da Estrela'

2. **Geographical indication type**

☒ protected designation of origin (PDO)

☐ protected geographical indication (PGI)

☐ geographical indication (GI)

3. **Sector**

☒ agricultural products

☐ wines

☐ spirit drinks

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

Portugal

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

Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development – Quality and Genetic Resources Division

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6. **Qualification as standard amendment**

Statement explaining why the amendment or amendments fall under the definition of a standard amendment as provided for in Article 24(4) of Regulation (EU) 2024/1143:

Explanation of why the amendment or amendments fall under the definition of a standard amendment as provided for in Article 53(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012:

These amendments are not considered Union amendments within the meaning of Article 53 of Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012, as amended by Regulation (EU) 2021/2117, since:

(a) they do not include a change in the name of the protected designation of origin or protected geographical indication, or in the use of that name;

(b) they do not risk voiding the links demonstrating that the quality or characteristics of the product are essentially due to a particular geographical environment with its inherent natural and human factors, for a protected designation of origin;

([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).

(c) they do not concern a traditional speciality guaranteed;

(d) they do not entail further restrictions on the marketing of the product.

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

1. Physical characteristics

The weight/size of Queijo Serra da Estrela has been amended in point B.1.1, paragraph (b), of the product specification and point 3.2 of the single document: from a weight/size of between 0,5 kg and 1,7 kg to a weight/size of between 0,4 kg and 1,7 kg, with a diameter of between 8 cm and 20 cm and a height of between 4 cm and 6 cm.

The weight/size of Queijo Serra da Estrela 'Velho' (mature) has been amended in point B.1.2, paragraph (b), of the product specification and point 3.2 of the single document: from a weight/size of between 0,7 kg and 1,2 kg to a weight/size of between 0,3 kg and 1,2 kg, with a diameter of between 6 cm and 20 cm and a height of between 2 cm and 6 cm.

Reasons: When referring to the shape, size and weight of Queijo Serra da Estrela, Antunes et al. (1943) point out that, although the average weight is 1,3 kg to 1,8 kg, it is also common to produce smaller (0,5 kg to 1 kg) and larger (2,5 kg to 3 kg) cheeses, especially when destined for retail sale. The size of the cheese generally depended on the quantity of milk available each day.

Oral testimonies point to the production of *queijetas* (cheeselets) – the popular name given to cheeses of around 0,5 kg – which were often made:

— when milk was scarce, particularly in April, May and June; or

— even in months with normal milk production, to make the fullest possible use of the curds, with preference being given to making three or four small cheeses (*queijetas*) rather than one or two large cheeses, which mature more unpredictably and are more difficult to sell.

This amendment affects the single document.

2. Chemical characteristics: purely indicative analytical indicators

Amendment of Article B.2 of the product specification: 'The production of Queijo Serra da Estrela stretches back as far into the distant past as its origins, but it is only relatively recently that new analytical tests were carried out on the product.' The following text has been inserted:

'These do not point to any changes in the typology of the cheese, as defined by its fat content on a dry matter basis (fat/100 g dry matter) and by its moisture content on a fat-free basis (MFFB).'

'In view of the above, it is possible to provide reference indicators for the analytical characteristics of Queijo Serra da Estrela, while for Queijo Serra da Estrela "Velho" the indicators we currently have are purely indicative.'

Reasons: The climatic conditions in the defined geographical area vary considerably over the course of the year, and this results in significant changes in the qualitative and quantitative composition of the pastures on which small ruminants are extensively reared. This explains the significant variations in the chemical composition of the milk obtained from the Bordaleira Serra da Estrela and Churra Mondegueira sheep over the course of the milk-producing season.

This situation is further accentuated by climate changes from year to year over the last few years and by the recent fires. All these factors lead to changes and variations in the characteristics, determining the aforementioned variations in composition and in the quantities available at certain times of the year, resulting in the aforementioned variations in the chemical composition of the milk produced by the small ruminants.

This amendment affects the single document.

3. 'Evidence that the product originates in the defined geographical area' – D. Guarantee of the product's geographical origin:

In point 1, the words 'and the certification mark' have been deleted.

In point 3, the words 'and certification' have been deleted.

Paragraph (b) has been deleted.

Reasons: Under national law (Legislative Order No 11/2018), certification marks are no longer affixed to the labelling of products with a name that is a protected designation of origin. The use of casein marks has now been authorised to better trace the cheeses and provide a better guarantee of their geographical origin.

The amendment does not affect the single document.

4. Verification of compliance – G. References to the control body

The text has been deleted and replaced by:

'Compliance with the product specification is verified by the competent authority (the Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development), which may delegate that power to a control body (CB) designated by the producer group and accredited for that purpose in accordance with the law (standard EN 17065).'

Reasons: In the light of the amendments made by Regulation (EU) 2017/625 to Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012 and in view of the national legislation referred to above (Legislative Order No 11/2018), which provides that 'certification marks' are no longer to be affixed to the labelling of products with a name that is a protected designation of origin, the provisions of the product specification need to be clarified.

The amendment does not affect the single document.

5. Labelling

The following information is to be shown on the labelling:

— the sales name, indicated by the words 'QUEIJO SERRA DA ESTRELA – DOP' [QUEIJO SERRA DA ESTRELA – PDO] or 'QUEIJO SERRA DA ESTRELA VELHO – DOP' [QUEIJO SERRA DA ESTRELA VELHO – PDO], as appropriate.

— the name, company name and address of the producer;

— an indication of the fat content or range or the nutritional declaration;

— the date of minimum durability, indicated by the words 'Best before end...', specifying the month and year;

— the storage temperature set by the producer;

— the quantity of cheese, expressed in kilograms (kg) or multiples or submultiples thereof;

— the words 'made from raw milk';

— the batch;

— the health mark.

The labelling of each unit or portion of cheese must also bear the name or identification number of the control body.

Reasons:

Under national law (Legislative Order No 11/2018), 'certification marks' are no longer affixed to the labelling of products with a name that is a protected designation of origin. Furthermore, there was a small but significant typographical error on the labelling. For the above reasons, the product specification needs to be amended.

This amendment affects the single document.

SINGLE DOCUMENT

'Queijo Serra da Estrela'

EU No: PDO-PT-0213-AM01 – 28.1.2025

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

'Queijo Serra da Estrela'

2. **Member State or Third Country**

Portugal

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 the product to which the name in (1) applies*

Cheese obtained by slow draining of the curds, following coagulation of unadulterated raw ewe's milk obtained from Bordaleira Serra da Estrela or Churra Mondegueira ewes, using the cardoon flower (*Cynara cardunculus* L.) as rennet. The minimum ripening time for 'Queijo Serra da Estrela' is 30 days. When the ripening time reaches a minimum of 120 days, the designation of origin 'Queijo Serra da Estrela' is qualified as 'Velho' (mature).

The main characteristics of the product are as follows:

	Queijo Serra da Estrela	Queijo Serra da Estrela Velho
Shape and consistency	Short (flat), uniform cylinder, with bulging sides and some bulging on the top and no defined edge	Short (flat), uniform cylinder, slight or no bulging on the sides and no edges
Rind	Smooth and semi-soft	Smooth to slightly wrinkled and hard to extra hard
Weight	Between 0,4 kg and 1,7 kg	0,3 kg to 1,2 kg
Diameter	8 cm to 20 cm	6 cm to 20 cm
Height	4 cm to 6 cm	2 cm to 6 cm
Texture	Closed, moderately buttery, loses its shape on cutting, compact, creamy and smooth, with few or no eyes	Closed or with some eyes, dry and slightly crumbly body, smooth
Colour	White or slightly yellowish	Yellowish to orange/brownish, becoming darker from the outside towards the centre
Sensory characteristics	Smooth, clean and slightly acidic bouquet	Pleasant, lingering, clean, strong to slightly strong and slightly pungent/salty bouquet
Fat in dry matter (g/100 g)	45 % to 60 %	> 60 %
Moisture content on a fat-free basis (g/100 g)	61 % to 69 %	49 % to 56 %

3.3. *Feed (for products of animal origin only)*

Only extensive and semi-extensive production systems are permitted, outdoor rearing being the most common method. The animals graze in the region, which has a distinctive, wild vegetation, ranging from pine forests and scrubland to irrigated meadows. Transhumance, where the animals are moved to other holdings (or pastures) located in the same geographical area, depending on the time of the year and the available feed, is quite a common practice. Other pasture and fodder species are usually grown in the region and are used to supplement the feed of local sheep at times when feed is most scarce. However, and only in times of adverse soil and climate conditions (snow or drought, for instance), straight or compound feedstuffs may be used to bolster the animals' diet, mainly at the start and end of the gestation period and at the height of lactation. The use of these feedstuffs must be authorised by the producer group and is controlled both quantitatively and qualitatively by the certification body.

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

Given that the animals must be of certified genetic and territorial origin, that their diet is governed by strict rules in terms of pasture quality and quantity, that the natural surroundings are crucial for obtaining milk and cheese with the required characteristics, that all of the steps in production have to be monitored both for product traceability and for the organoleptic qualities of the final product, and that the manufacture and ripening stages are delicate operations both in terms of traceability and in terms of the authenticity, hygiene and sensory properties of the final product, all of the production steps of 'Queijo Serra da Estrela' must take place in the geographical area defined in point 4, from the birth of the animals to the packaging of the cheese, whatever commercial presentation is used.

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

Since 'Queijo Serra da Estrela' is a live product which continues to develop even after it is preserved, cut and packaged, these operations may take place only in the region of origin in view of the need to:

— guarantee the product's authenticity and the physical, chemical and organoleptic characteristics which define the special quality of these cheeses – attributes which only the producers, who live in the region and regularly consume these products, are capable of recognising;

— assess the quality of each cheese individually before subjecting it to any of the above-mentioned operations;

— ensure that the cheese, even when cut, remains characteristically creamy. To achieve that, it is imperative to select cheeses which are sufficiently mature when the relevant operation is carried out;

— ensure that, for the mature ('Velho') cheese, the slices have the required consistency and do not crumble. To achieve that, it is imperative to select cheeses with the appropriate bouquet and consistency at the precise moment during the ripening phase when the cheese is cut;

— guarantee that the traditional reputation of the product is maintained and is not misused and that the consumer is not misled;

— guarantee that the health and hygiene conditions of the product are constantly maintained throughout the various operations;

— make it possible to monitor the operations properly and in line with regulatory requirements;

— guarantee that each unit or portion of cheese is traceable to its production facilities and its agricultural holding, thereby ensuring the geographical origin of the product.

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

In addition to the mandatory wording required by law, the words 'QUEIJO SERRA DA ESTRELA – DOP' [QUEIJO SERRA DA ESTRELA – PDO] are also mandatory, supplemented by the qualifier 'VELHO' for cheeses ripened for more than 120 days.

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

The geographical area is limited to the municipalities of Carregal do Sal, Celorico da Beira, Fornos de Algodres, Gouveia, Mangualde, Manteigas, Nelas, Oliveira do Hospital, Penalva do Castelo and Seia and to the parishes of Carapito, Cortiçada, Dornelas, Eirado, Forninhos, Penaverde and Valverde, to the municipality of Aguiar da Beira and the parishes of Anceriz, Barril do Alva, Cerdeira, Coja, Pomares and Vila Cova do Alva, to the municipality of Arganil and the parishes of Aldeia de Carvalho, Cortes do Meio, Erada, Paul, Sarzedo, Unhais da Serra and Verdelhos, to the municipality of Covilhã and the parishes of Aldeia Viçosa, Cavadoude, Corujeira, Fala, Famalicão, Fernão Joanes, Maçainhas de Baixo, Mizarela, Pero Soares, Porto da Carne, São Vicente, Sé Seixo Amarelo, Trinta, Vale de Estrelas, Valhelhas, Videmonte, Vila Cortez do Mondego and Vila Soeiro, to the municipality of Guarda and the parishes of Midões, Póvoa de Midões and Vila Nova de Oliveirinha, to the municipality of Tábua and the parishes of Canas de Santa Maria, Ferreirós do Dão, Lobão da Beira, Molelos, Mosteiro de Fráguas, Nandufe, Parada de Gonta, Sabugosa, São Miguel do Outeiro, Tonda and Tondela, to the municipality of Tondela and the parishes of Aldeia Nova, Carnicães, Feital, Fiães, Freches, Santa Maria, São Pedro, Tamanho, Torres, Vila Franca das Naves and Vilares, to the municipality of Trancoso and the parishes of Fragosela, Loureiro de Silgueiros, Povolide and São João de Lourosa and to the municipality of Viseu.

5. **Link with the geographical area**

5.1. *Specificity of the geographical area*

The entire region is located on the Beira plateau, with agroclimatic conditions characterised by long, cold, rainy winters with occasional snow, and hot, dry summers.

Besides the tree layer, this region also has a layer of shrubs and herbaceous plants, which make up the diet of the grazing animals. This layer consists predominantly of brushwood (*Erica*, *Ulex* (gorse), *Cytisus* and *Genista* (brooms)). The natural pasture is made up of wild perennial grasses, and the cultivated pasture is mainly composed of white clover and subterranean clover. Acidophilic species of flora predominate, mainly consisting of grasses and legumes that are tolerant of cold, acidity and low soil fertility. The most frequently used forage crops are oats, rye, maize, fodder sorghum and meadow grass or annual ryegrass.

The region is home to two breeds exclusively used for producing this cheese: the Bordaleira Serra da Estrela and Churra Mondegueira breeds. For centuries, the animals have taken full advantage of the sparse pastures in this region.

5.2. *Specificity of the product*

On the basis of the know-how of its producers, 'Queijo Serra da Estrela' is obtained exclusively from raw milk, using the cardoon flower as a natural coagulant.

'Queijo Serra da Estrela' has distinctive characteristics due to the production conditions described above. It is shaped like a short, uniform cylinder, with bulging sides and some bulging on the top and no defined edge, with a smooth, semi-soft rind and a closed, moderately buttery texture which loses its shape on cutting. It is compact, creamy and smooth, with few or no eyes and a white or slightly yellowish colour. It has a smooth, clean and slightly acidic bouquet. These characteristics grow naturally stronger during the maturing process, resulting in 'Queijo Serra da Estrela' 'Velho', which can be described as follows: smooth to slightly wrinkled rind, hard to extra hard consistency, closed texture or with some eyes, dry and slightly crumbly body, smooth, yellowish to orange/brownish in colour, becoming darker from the outside towards the centre, with a pleasant, lingering, clean, strong to slightly strong and slightly pungent/salty bouquet.

5.3. *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)*

Agricultural and forestry activities have essentially been able to develop in the Serra da Estrela region because of the soil and climate conditions, one of the main activities being the rearing of sheep of the local Bordaleira Serra da Estrela and Churra Mondegueira breeds. The milk they produce is used to make Serra da Estrela's renowned cheese and curd cheese, which have distinctive characteristics in terms of colour, aroma, flavour and texture.

The region and the cheeses produced there were mentioned in texts by Roman authors. The cheeses were also described as a food of choice on board ships during the Age of Discovery and were mentioned in sixteenth-century plays.

Reference to publication of the product specification

https://tradicional.dgadr.gov.pt/images/prod_imagens/queijos/docs/CE_Queijo_Serra_Estrela_2022.pdf