C/2024/4750

26.7.2024

Publication of an application for registration of a name 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/2024/4750)

Following this publication, the authorities of a Member State or of a third country, or a natural or legal person having a legitimate interest and established or resident in a third country, may lodge, in accordance with Article 17 of Regulation (EU) 2024/1143 of the European Parliament and of the Council [1] an opposition with the Commission within 3 months from the date of this publication.

SINGLE DOCUMENT

'ΤΣΑΛΑΦΟΥΤΙ / TSALAFOUTI'

EU No: PDO-GR-02909 – 10.4.2023

PDO (x) PGI ( )

1. Name(s) of PDO

'ΤΣΑΛΑΦΟΥΤΙ / TSALAFOUTI'

2. Member State or Third Country

Greece

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*

'ΤΣΑΛΑΦΟΥΤΙ / TSALAFOUTI' is a white spreadable cheese with a soft, creamy texture. The taste is slightly sweet, and it leaves a mildly acidic after-taste due to its highly acidic character. It also has a mild aroma reflecting the local herbs used in the free-range diet of the animals in the area.

It is an acid-coagulated cheese, with 'fermenting' yeast species present in significant amounts and a highly acidic character (pH 3,8-4,6). This ensures an especially low concentration of total *Staphylococcus*, including strains of the pathogenic *Staphylococcus aureus*, as well as coliforms, with values below 2,5 and 1 log cfu/g respectively. These characteristics, together with an absence of 'surface' aerobic fungus, also due to the product's acidity, help to prevent the product from deteriorating.

[1] Regulation (EU) 2024/1143 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 April 2024 on geographical indications for wine, spirit drinks and agricultural products, as well as traditional specialities guaranteed and optional quality terms for agricultural products, amending Regulations (EU) No 1308/2013, (EU) 2019/787 and (EU) 2019/1753 and repealing Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012 (OJ L, 2024/1143, 23.4.2024, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1143/oj).

The physical and chemical characteristics are as follows:

— Fat content: 10-17 % of total weight

— Protein content: minimum 7 %

— Moisture content: 66-73 %

— Tel. 3,8-4,6

— Salt content: 1,3-2,0 %.

'ΤΣΑΛΑΦΟΥΤΙ / TSALAFOUTI' is traditionally made in the areas of the central-southern edge of the Pindus mountain range from sheep's milk or a blend of sheep and goat's milk. The goat's milk does not exceed 20 % of the total milk used. A wide range of written sources from the beginning of the 20th century record the tradition, reputation and history of the 'ΤΣΑΛΑΦΟΥΤΙ / TSALAFOUTI' cheese. These sources demonstrate that the product has been made in the demarcated area since the 17th century. Similarly, written testimonies record 'Tsalafoutis' as a nickname for the people of the area for over 120 years. This shows that the cheese was so well known and established in popular culture that it could be used as a nickname for the local people of the area. The modern method of cheese-making reflects the traditional method, requiring a very short production and ripening time, of no more than 12 days. The cheese has a shelf-life of about 60 days from the day of its production or, where modified atmosphere packaging is used, once its packaging is opened.

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

'ΤΣΑΛΑΦΟΥΤΙ / TSALAFOUTI' is made exclusively from the milk of sheep and goats traditionally reared by nomadic grazing within the demarcated area.

When the plants stored for winter are insufficient, the animals' daily diet is supplemented by feed produced either within the demarcated area or outside it. In the latter case, such feed must represent less than 50 % of the animals' daily diet.

The diet of the sheep and goats is based on the flora of the demarcated area, through grazing and/or feed consisting of plants from the area which have been dried and stored. Such feed is used on days when the weather conditions are unfavourable.

The area has a significant number of wild plants with aromatic and medicinal properties. These plants confer specific organoleptic characteristics on the milk produced by the sheep and goats that consume them as part of their diet. Their inclusion in the diet is therefore important.

The sheep and goats traditionally reared in the area are animals of small to medium body weight, not requiring much food, mainly used for milk production. The animals are adapted to the mountainous terrain of the area. Their yields are relatively low, however they produce milk with particular organoleptic and physical and chemical characteristics. This is due to their diet, which is based on the flora of the demarcated area, directly through grazing and/or as feed consisting of plants from the area which have been dried and stored for use on days when the weather conditions are unfavourable.

The milk used to produce 'ΤΣΑΛΑΦΟΥΤΙ / TSALAFOUTI' must not be concentrated or contain additives such as milk powder or concentrate, milk proteins, colourants, preservatives, caseinates or other additives. In addition, there must be no trace of harmful foreign substances such as pesticides or antibiotics. In the winter months, the addition of rennet is necessary in powdered or liquid form, which can be industrially produced. Harmless lactic acid bacteria may also be used.

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

The whole production and ripening process of the product must take place within the demarcated geographical area, with raw materials exclusively from the area.

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

'ΤΣΑΛΑΦΟΥΤΙ / TSALAFOUTI' is packaged in plastic or other food packaging in quantities up to 10 kg.

The product must be packaged in the demarcated geographical area as the raw material, milk, is prone to microbial deterioration. A further reason is that the final product is fresh and deteriorates easily as it has no rind. Packaging in the area therefore prevents the risk to the quality and organoleptic characteristics of the product and protects consumer safety. In addition, packaging in the production area contributes to the traceability of the finished product and facilitates checks on its origin. Finally, producers from the demarcated geographical area may supply packaged 'ΤΣΑΛΑΦΟΥΤΙ / TSALAFOUTI' cheese to traders to be repackaged in smaller portions outside of the demarcated area. In this case, the product label must state the name of the producer, the production date and the production batch code. This is to ensure full traceability of the product.

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

Producers from the demarcated geographical area may supply packaged 'ΤΣΑΛΑΦΟΥΤΙ / TSALAFOUTI' cheese to traders to be repackaged in smaller portions outside of the demarcated area. In this case, the product label must state the name of the producer, the production date and the production batch code. This is to ensure full traceability of the product.

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

The demarcated area for the production of the milk and the process of making 'ΤΣΑΛΑΦΟΥΤΙ / TSALAFOUTI' cheese comprises the following: 1) REGION OF CENTRAL GREECE (STEREA ELLADA): the whole Regional Unit of Evrytania and the municipality of Makrakomi in the Regional Unit of Fthiotida; 2) REGION OF EPIRUS: the municipality of North Tzoumerka (municipal units of Matsouki and Pramanta) in the Regional Unit of Ioannina, and the municipalities of Central Tzoumerka, Arta (municipal unit of Xirovouni) and Georgios Karaiskakis (municipal units of Tetrafylia and Irakleia) in the Regional Unit of Arta; 3) REGION OF WESTERN GREECE: the municipalities of Xiromero, Amfilochia, Aktio-Vonitsa and Agrinio; 4) REGION OF THESSALY: the municipalities of Argithea, Limni Plastira and Mouzaki in the Regional Unit of Karditsa, and the municipality of Pyli in the Regional Unit of Trikala.

A common characteristic of these areas is the mountainous terrain of the central-southern edge of the Pindus mountain range, which includes the mountainous areas of Agrafa, Valtos, Argithea, Aspropotamos and Tzoumerka. Mountains are a significant presence: the Tymfristos, Panaitoliko, Agrafa and Argithea mountains, and the Athamanika range, with elevations often over 2 000 metres. The area is also characterised by valleys and rivers.

5. **Link with the geographical area**

'ΤΣΑΛΑΦΟΥΤΙ / TSALAFOUTI' is a cheese that has been directly linked to its production area for many years. Livestock rearing in these areas has remained unchanged down the years. As a result, production is based on local customs, traditions and techniques, which confer on the products the characteristics that differentiate them from similar products of other regions. 'ΤΣΑΛΑΦΟΥΤΙ / TSALAFOUTI' is a product which falls into this category, with a strong traditional and historical component. Key aspects of the link with the place of production include the raw material, milk, and the cheese-making method which has remained almost unchanged from generation to generation.

The geomorphology of the area is rich in pasture but is not suitable for agricultural activities other than livestock rearing. It is highly significant in forming the characteristics of the milk. The area has a mountain climate with a variety of microclimates. Cold winters with snow and cool summers are a basic feature of the climate in the area, together with an average annual temperature that is low for Greece. The high levels of rainfall and absence of serious droughts in summer constitute another feature. The average rainfall is over 700 mm per year, with the figure reaching 918 mm in the Karpenisi area. The effect of the climate is apparent in the significant forest cover and the variety of species of Mediterranean flora. Some 1 139 wild plant taxa have been recorded, of which 119 are endemic to the Balkans and 89 endemic to Greece.

The milk-producing sheep and goats are adapted to the conditions and challenges of the area. They originate from animals reared in the area for years. Most livestock farmers have small herds which they maintain themselves, and they also have their own breeding programmes. Therefore, they rarely purchase new animals from other areas, as a key factor in replacing stock is selection from populations of animals that have been reared in the area for years. The focus is on the anatomical and productive characteristics of the mothers. This continuous selection process has resulted in animals that do not require much food and are adapted to the mountainous terrain and resistant to low temperatures and to diseases.

The milk-producing sheep and goats of the demarcated area are of small to medium body weight, with the right anatomical characteristics for moving nimbly through the difficult terrain of the pastures. The nomadic pasturing methods used for the sheep and goats means free grazing on the flora growing in the elevated parts of the area. These methods produce lower yields, as the animals move more and therefore consume energy finding food. They are also exposed to weather conditions such as cold, heat, including heat stress, and rain, all of which require energy expenditure.

Despite the low yields, the dairy animals of the area produce high-quality milk due to the rich local flora that features in their diet. According to a study entitled 'Effect of the Composition of Grazing Matter on the Quality Characteristics of the Traditional Greek Dairy Product "Tsalafouti"' published in 2017 in the *Journal of Environmental Science, Toxicology and Food Technology*, this milk has a high fat content. As a result, it is thicker than milk produced in areas with lower-lying irrigated pastures. It also has an intense, powerful aroma due to its high content of volatile compounds: acyclic and cyclic terpenes, ketones, aldehydes, esters and others. These result from the free grazing on aromatic and medicinal herbs in the area.

'ΤΣΑΛΑΦΟΥΤΙ / TSALAFOUTI' was traditionally produced from milk of sheep and goats given towards the end of lactation in the demarcated area. The process began with the milk being strained immediately after milking. The milk was then boiled while being stirred, and the batch was placed in wooden churns, held in pits inside huts at great elevation, at temperatures between 10 and 16 °C. The batch was stirred regularly so that it ripened within two weeks, developing a thick and creamy texture. The addition of coarse salt also played an important role in cheesemaking. Salt was added only at the end of the process. Rennet was added only when considered necessary. The development and adoption of a cheese-making process not requiring much time was necessitated by the hilly terrain. This obliged livestock farmers to be in inhospitable places, far from their home. The speed of the process was also helped by the relatively thick milk of the area.

Today, 'ΤΣΑΛΑΦΟΥΤΙ / TSALAFOUTI' is produced using the identical process, as follows. The milk is first boiled/pasteurised and then cooled to between 12 and 18 °C. Where necessary, rennet and lactic acid bacteria (commercial starter) are added. The lactic acid bacteria produce lactic acid at a specific, controlled rate. The rennet, as well as creating the curd, contributes to the changes that occur during ripening, with the hydrolysis of the proteins by the proteolytic enzymes contained in the rennet. The preparation is then placed in airtight containers made of food-grade material. It is left to ripen at that temperature for up to 12 days. A key factor in production is the frequent, regular stirring, at least twice a day. This favours the process of natural fermentation by microflora in the milk which, together with the microflora in the atmosphere, help to produce the relatively thick and creamy texture. After ripening, salt is added. The cheese is then drained through a cloth in order to obtain the desired moisture content of the product.

Using this special procedure gives 'ΤΣΑΛΑΦΟΥΤΙ / TSALAFOUTI' its characteristic creamy texture and distinctive physical, chemical and organoleptic characteristics, which set it apart from other spreadable cheeses. Specifically, the acid-coagulated method is used with a short ripening period and frequent stirring. This helps the production of lactic acid by the microorganisms in the milk that consume lactose. The result is a highly acidic product: pH 3,8-4,6. At the same time, the cheese-making method used gives 'ΤΣΑΛΑΦΟΥΤΙ / TSALAFOUTI' a very high moisture content. This means that the product has a low fat content, 10-17 %, despite the high fat content of the milk from the area. Finally, boiling the milk increases the total solids content, producing the characteristic cohesive structure.

'ΤΣΑΛΑΦΟΥΤΙ / TSALAFOUTI' has a soft creamy texture while, in organoleptic terms, it is firm with a fresh and slightly sweet taste which leaves a very slight acidic aftertaste due to its acidic character (low pH). In addition, the mild and pleasant aroma can be attributed to the sheep and goats grazing on the flora of the area, which is rich in aromatic and medicinal plants containing large quantities of volatile terpenes and aldehydes. Due to the volatile compounds content from the plants of the area, the aroma has a woody character with notes of fir and pine (due to the α-pinene they contain), as well as aromas of sage and thyme, which are in abundance. A specific characteristic resulting from the use of the acid-coagulation method relates to the absence of 'surface' aerobic fungus, which is known to cause fresh cheeses to deteriorate. Finally, an important quality of the product is its highly acidic nature which ensures an especially low concentration of total *Staphylococcus* including strains of the pathogenic *Staphylococcus aureus,* as well as coliforms, with values lower than 2,5 and 1 log cfu/g respectively. Coliforms are often factors in the deterioration of fresh cheeses.

There is a wide range of written sources concerning the tradition, reputation and history of the product, highlighting the strong link between 'ΤΣΑΛΑΦΟΥΤΙ / TSALAFOUTI' and the demarcated area. Examples include the *Poimenika tis Roumelis* [Pastoral of Roumeli, historical name for Central Greece] by D. Loukopoulos, a book written in the local dialect and published in 1930. It makes numerous references to 'ΤΣΑΛΑΦΟΥΤΙ / TSALAFOUTI', confirming the product's inextricable link with the lives of livestock rearers in Roumeli, and its commercial and nutritional significance. A further testimony is the book *I vlachozoi sta vouna* [The shepherd's life in the mountains] by V. Lamnatos, published in 1976. The author talks of his childhood in the 1920s, describing the great importance of the cheese in the livestock rearers' diet. He provides important information about the trade in the product, as well as the great enthusiasm for buying 'ΤΣΑΛΑΦΟΥΤΙ / TSALAFOUTI' on the part of those who did not own animals.

There are many more recent books, publications and essays on the link and the importance of the product for the economy of the demarcated area. For example, the 2006 book *Ta Theodoriana Artas* [Theodoriana, Arta] provides ample documentary evidence about the lives and customs of the people living in the area since the mid-17th century. The work includes a detailed description of the importance of 'ΤΣΑΛΑΦΟΥΤΙ / TSALAFOUTI' cheese for the local community, with information about the raw materials and production method.

It is indicative of the product's reputation that a simple internet search of the phrase 'ΤΣΑΛΑΦΟΥΤΙ / TSALAFOUTI' produces over 22 000 hits. Examples include:

1. On the *Aperantiaka Nea*, a news website from Agrafa, there is a post entitled 'Ti einai to Tsalafouti' ['What is Tsalafouti'], which provides significant information about the product, how to keep it and ways to serve it.
2. On the website of *Athinorama*, one of the best-known Greek magazines, there is a presentation of the local and imported cheeses eaten in Greece. It includes 'ΤΣΑΛΑΦΟΥΤΙ / TSALAFOUTI' among the traditional cheeses of mainland Greece, with emphasis on its gastronomy, organoleptic characteristics and the ways in which it can be eaten.
3. On the website of Ilias Mamalakis, one of Greece's most famous chefs, there is a list of the cheeses of Central Greece. It includes 'ΤΣΑΛΑΦΟΥΤΙ / TSALAFOUTI', which is described as spreadable, with a yogurt-like texture.
4. On *sympetheroi.eu*, a Greek website with international reach, 'ΤΣΑΛΑΦΟΥΤΙ / TSALAFOUTI' is included among the Greek cheeses in the 'light' (low-fat, low-calorie) category.
5. On the local website of Petrilia, lawyer and folklorist M. Papadimitriou of Argithea, Karditsa, has published a significant amount of folklore concerning 'ΤΣΑΛΑΦΟΥΤΙ / TSALAFOUTI' cheese, its importance and its link with its place of production.

Reference to publication of the specification

https://www.minagric.gr/images/stories/docs/agrotis/POP-PGE/2021/prodiagrafes_tsalafouti010424.pdf