C/2025/2613

6.5.2025

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/2025/2613)

COMMUNICATION OF APPROVAL OF A STANDARD AMENDMENT

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

'Fourme de Montbrison'

EU No: PDO-FR-0542-AM01 – 20.2.2025

1. **Product name**

'Fourme de Montbrison'

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**

France

5. **National authority communicating the standard amendment**

Ministry for Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forests

6. **Qualification as standard amendment**

The application for amendment to the 'Fourme de Montbrison' PDO does not involve any of the three situations constituting a Union amendment, specifically:

(a) it does not involve a change in the name of the protected designation of origin;

(b) it is unlikely to void the link with the geographical environment;

(c) it does not entail further restrictions on the marketing of the product.

The French authorities therefore consider that the application is for a standard amendment.

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

1. *Responsible department in the Member State*

The name and contact details of the responsible department of the Member State have been updated.

The amendment does not affect the single document.

([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).

2. *Applicant group*

The contact details of the applicant group have been updated.

The composition of the applicant group has been replaced by the following wording:

'Composition: any natural or legal person effectively involved in the production, processing or preparation set out in the "Fourme de Montbrison" PDO specification.'

The amendment does not affect the single document.

3. *Type of product*

The section relating to the type of product, formerly defined by its class, has been deleted from the specification.

The amendment affects the single document.

4. *Product description*

The minimum fat content of the dry matter for 'Fourme de Montbrison' has been reduced from 52 grams per 100 grams of cheese after total dessication to 50 grams per 100 grams of cheese after total dessication.

All the cheesemakers have been seeing this value decrease several times during the year for several years now, particularly during those periods when the cows are put out to pasture (in spring and sometimes in autumn, after a summer drought).

Studies and experiments have allowed several causes to be identified.

The first cause is linked to changes in the herds. In the 1990s the Prim'Holstein breed accounted for most of the herds, but now the Montbéliarde breed dominates. Montbéliarde herds have a fat to protein ratio of around 1,20 (compared to 1,28 for the Prim'Holstein herds). A fat to protein ratio of over 1,20 is necessary for the cheese to have a fat content that is greater than 52 % of dry matter. The guidelines of the national genetic selection schemes for the Montbéliarde breed do not favour an increase of this ratio.

The second cause is linked to changes in forage systems. More and more farms are practicing cyclic grazing. The cows eat young and tender grass, mainly in spring, when the hay stocks are depleted, which lowers the fat to protein ratio. Global warming amplifies this phenomenon, with cows being put out to pasture earlier and less frequent conditions favourable to harvesting hay (preferentially positioning stocks towards wet-preserved grass). The consumption of maize silage slightly improves the fat content of the cheese's dry matter, but it is limited by the product specification and cannot be combined with the consumption of maize cob silage frequently used as a concentrate. This makes it difficult to influence the fat content of the dry matter of the cheese through the cows' diet.

Furthermore, the results from the organoleptic examination committees show that the reduction in the fat content of the cheese's dry matter from 52 % to 50 % has not had any impact on its organoleptic quality.

For these reasons, it is proposed to lower the fat content of the dry matter of the cheese from 52 % to 50 %, which corresponds to the rate initially set for 'Fourme de Montbrison' in the 1970s.

The amendment affects the single document.

5. *Demarcation of the geographical area*

In the first sentence, the words 'central area of the designation' have been replaced by the more precise 'central part of the geographical area of the designation'.

The sentence 'The area therefore covers 33 municipalities in the departments of Loire and Puy-de-Dôme' has been replaced by 'The perimeter of the geographical area approved by the National Institute of Origin and Quality (INAO) at the meeting of the competent national committee on 13 October 2000 covers the territory of the following municipalities, on the basis of the 2024 Official Geographic Code (COG)'. The list of municipalities this perimeter includes have been updated accordingly, without changing the perimeter's contours.

The sentence 'Maps of this geographical area can be found on the website of the National Institute of Origin and Quality' has been added, replacing the following sentence, which has been deleted: 'The attached map shows the administrative boundaries of this demarcation (Annex 1).' The attached map has, therefore, been deleted.

The amendment affects the single document.

6. *Specific labelling details*

It has been added that the mandatory labelling particulars in the product specification are 'in addition to the mandatory particulars laid down in the rules on the labelling and presentation of foodstuffs'.

It is noted that the indication of the name of the designation and the PDO symbol of the European Union must be 'in the same visual field'.

The amendment affects the single document.

7. *References to the inspection bodies*

The information on the inspection body and the name and contact details of the responsible department of the Member State have been updated.

Specifically, the sentence 'The National Institute of Origin and Quality is a public administrative body with legal personality, which reports to the Ministry of Agriculture, and has been designated as the competent authority within the meaning of Regulation (EC) No 882/2004 of 29 April 2004.' has been deleted and the sentence 'In accordance with the provisions of Articles 39 and 40 of Regulation (EU) No 2024/1143, verification of compliance with the specification, before placing the product on the market, is carried out by a product certification body whose name and contact details are available on the INAO's website and in the European Commission's database.' has been added.

The amendment does not affect the single document.

8. *National requirements*

The table of main points to be checked has been updated to take account of the amendment to the 'Product description' section and to adapt the assessment methods as necessary in line with the control plan.

The amendment does not affect the single document.

SINGLE DOCUMENT

Designations of origin and geographical indications of agricultural products

1. **Name(s)**

'Fourme de Montbrison'

2. **Geographical indication type**

PDO ☒ PGI ☐

3. **Country to which the defined geographical area belongs**

France

4. **Description of the agricultural product**

4.1. *Classification of the agricultural product in accordance with the Combined Nomenclature heading and code, as referred to in Article 6(1) of Regulation (EU) 2024/1143*

— 04 – DAIRY PRODUCE; BIRDS' EGGS; NATURAL HONEY; EDIBLE PRODUCTS OF ANIMAL ORIGIN, NOT ELSEWHERE SPECIFIED OR INCLUDED

0406 – Cheese and curd

4.2. *Description of the agricultural product to which the registered name applies*

'Fourme de Montbrison' is a cheese produced from renneted cow's milk. It is made in the form of a cylinder between 17 and 21 cm in height and 11,5 and 14,5 cm in diameter, weighing 2,1 to 2,7 kg. It has blue veins, is unpressed, uncooked, fermented and salted by adding salt to the curd when it is placed in the mould.

The fat content must be at least 50 grams per 100 grams of cheese after total desiccation.

The dry matter content must not be less than 52 g per 100 g of ripened cheese.

The designation of origin 'Fourme de Montbrison' must not be used for the cheese until 32 days after renneting.

There is a bloom on the dry, orange-coloured rind, where white, yellow and red mould may also be present. The inside of the cheese is cream in colour, with few openings and a marbling of light blue veins.

'Fourme de Montbrison' has a homogeneous, slightly firm texture and melts in the mouth. It has a subtle, scented flavour and a fruity, milky taste with a hint of blue cheese, making it rather mild. A hint of salt and a slight bitterness are accepted.

4.3. *Derogations on sourcing of feed (for products of animal origin designated by a protected designation of origin only) and restrictions on sourcing of raw materials (for processed products designated by a protected geographical indication only)*

It is clear from the provisions laid down that at least 70 % of the dry matter of the dairy cows' annual total feed ration is produced in the geographical area.

The geographical area's topography and upland climate make it technically impossible for it to produce all the complementary feed given to the dairy cows.

Because most of the dairy cows' basic ration comes from the geographical area and the complementary feedstuffs are strictly limited, these external factors have a limited influence on the characteristics essentially due to the geographical environment.

Throughout the year, the dairy cows' basic ration comprises fodder from the defined geographical area.

The use of supplements and additives is limited to a maximum of 1 800 kg of dry matter per dairy cow per year on average for all the dairy cows.

The feed authorised in the basic ration comprises all fodder except cruciferous plants in the form of fodder.

The proportion of hay, grass, wilted grass or grass silage, expressed as dry matter, must be greater than or equal to 80 % of the fodder in the dairy cows' basic ration on average for all the dairy cows over the year.

The proportion of maize silage, expressed as dry matter, must not exceed 20 % of the dairy cows' basic ration on average for all the dairy cows over the year.

Outside the grazing period, hay represents at least 3 kg of dry matter per dairy cow per day on average for all the dairy cows.

When grass is available, grazing is mandatory for the dairy cows as soon as the weather allows. The minimum duration of grazing is 150 days a year.

Only the raw materials and additives specified in a positive list are authorised in the supplements and additives given to the dairy cows.

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

The milk is produced and the cheese made, matured and preserved for 32 days from the date of renneting, within the geographical area.

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

Cutting 'Fourme de Montbrison' is authorised if it does not completely alter its texture. Rind must be present on portions weighing more than 50 grams.

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

In addition to the compulsory information required by the rules on the labelling and presentation of foodstuffs, the labelling of cheeses bearing the designation of origin 'Fourme de Montbrison' must include the following in the same field of vision:

— the name of the designation of origin in characters at least two-thirds the size of the largest characters on the label;

— the European Union's PDO logo.

Irrespective of the regulatory indications applicable to all cheeses, it is forbidden to place any qualifier directly next to the designation of origin, with the exception of specific trade marks or brand names.

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

The geographical area for 'Fourme de Montbrison' comprises the following:

Department of Loire: the municipalities of Bard, Cervières, Chalmazel-Jeansagnière, La Chamba, La Chambonie, Champoly, Châtelneuf, La Côte-en-Couzan, Écotay-l'Olme, Essertines-en-Châtelneuf, Lérigneux, Noirétable, Palogneux, Roche, Saint-Bonnet-le-Courreau, Saint-Didier-sur-Rochefort, Saint-Georges-en-Couzan, Saint-Jean-la-Vêtre, Saint-Just-en-Bas, Saint-Laurent-Rochefort, Saint-Priest-la-Vêtre, Saint-Romain-d'Urfé, Les Salles, Sauvain, La Valla-sur-Rochefort, Verrières-en-Forez, and Vêtre-sur-Anzon (only the territory of the delegated municipality of Saint-Julien-la-Vêtre).

Department of Puy-de-Dôme: the municipalities of Brugeron, Job, Saint-Anthème, Saint-Pierre-la-Bourlhonne and Valcivières.

6. **Link with the geographical area**

The geographical area for the designation of origin 'Fourme de Montbrison' mainly comprises the 'hautes chaumes' forming the summits of the Forez mountains within the borders of the departments of the Loire and the Puy-de-Dôme, as well as the eastern part of the Forez mountains. The area is an upland region (with an altitude of 1 634 m at the highest point) oriented north-south overall, situated on a granite bedrock and bordered by natural boundaries. The landscape is made up of mountain and subalpine moors giving structure to bare plateaux with round and gentle hilltops, surrounded by mainly coniferous forest slopes. There are numerous peat bogs and meadows. Precipitation is relatively high (more than 1 000 mm a year on average). The climate is subject to an oceanic and continental influence. Average annual temperatures therefore tend to be cold, below 10 °C and often below 5 °C. The winters are long and cold, with frequent snow.

Because of the high altitude and precipitation, fodder production is essentially based on the permanent meadows.

The production of 'Fourme de Montbrison' dates back to the early Middle Ages in the region of the Haut-Forez, where an agri-pastoral system was maintained until the Second World War. The cheese was produced in 'jasseries', mountain-pasture buildings which became established on both sides of the Forez mountains. At that time the cheese was produced during the summer season from the milk of modest-sized herds; the women made the cheese while the men remained in the village and continued the summer work in the fields. The natural environment provided coniferous tree trunks which, once hollowed out, made gutters (called 'chéneaux') perfectly suited to draining the cheese during production. The cheese was often preserved until the descent from the mountain summering, then sold at the markets on either side of the mountains, including the large market of Montbrison.

Nowadays the dairy farms rely largely on the permanent meadows. The production conditions for 'Fourme de Montbrison', particularly the mandatory grazing during the period when this is possible, the grass-based feed ration and the restricted use of maize silage, make the best possible use of this natural resource.

Inherited from the ancestral techniques, the technological process of producing 'Fourme de Montbrison' makes optimum use of local know-how, bringing into play:

— appropriate mixing linked to a small curd grain size of approximately 0,5 to 1 cm thick;

— salting in the mass and reduced exterior salting;

— the very special technique of additional draining in gutters made of coniferous wood.

'Fourme de Montbrison' is a veined cheese with a subtle, scented flavour; it is in the shape of a cylinder from 17 to 21 cm in height and from 11,5 to 14,5 cm in diameter, with an orange-coloured outer covering. The cheese has small openings and a hint of 'blue cheese', making it rather mild.

The specific characteristics of 'Fourme de Montbrison' originate in particular from the special methods used to produce the milk and the cheese.

The production of the milk is based on the richness of the pastures in the Forez mountains and contributes to the subtle, scented flavour of 'Fourme de Montbrison'.

Its relatively small size is linked to its origin: small herds with small-scale milk production and cheesemaking carried out by women.

The rather mild taste of 'Fourme de Montbrison' is linked to the fine cutting of the curd grains. This reduced curd grain size causes small openings in the cheese, resulting in restricted development of Penicillium roqueforti moulds which is less pronounced than in other veined cheeses.

The very specific orangey colour of the rind is influenced by the salting techniques, which promote the establishment of surface flora. The development of surface flora is also promoted by the draining in coniferous wood gutters. The wooden gutters are a reservoir of surface flora and contribute directly to the development of this flora by preventing the rind from drying out too quickly.

The salting techniques used also make 'Fourme de Montbrison' less salty than other blue cheeses.

Reference to the publication of the product specification of the geographical indication

https://info.agriculture.gouv.fr/boagri/document_administratif-ed0a24fa-0dbd-44b8-8154-591b0b5d271b/telechargement