OTHER ACTS

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Publication of an application for approval of an amendment, which is not minor, to a product specification 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 17/09)

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 three months from the date of this publication.

APPLICATION FOR APPROVAL OF AN AMENDMENT TO THE PRODUCT SPECIFICATION OF PROTECTED DESIGNATIONS OF ORIGIN / PROTECTED GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATIONS WHICH IS NOT MINOR

Application for approval of an amendment in accordance with the first subparagraph of Article 53(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012

'**Queso Casín**'

EU No: PDO-ES-0178-AM01— 24.9.2021

PDO (X) PGI ( )

1. **Applicant group and legitimate interest**

Regulatory Council for the protected designation of origin 'Queso Casín'

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The Regulatory Council is the group representing the operators, officially charged with managing the PDO, in accordance with the provisions of the legislation in force (Resolution of 31 July 2020 of the Department of Rural Affairs and Territorial Cohesion approving the Statutes of the Regulatory Council for the Protected Designation of Origin 'Queso Casín'); its remit includes proposing amendments to the product specification.

2. **Member State or Third Country**

Spain

3. **Heading in the product specification affected by the amendment**

☐ Name of product

☒ Description of product

☒ Geographical area

☒ Proof of origin

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

☒ Method of production

☒ Link

☒ Labelling

☒ Other [to be specified]

— Control body

— Verification of compliance with the product specification

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

☒ Amendment to product specification of a registered PDO or PGI not to be qualified as min or in accordance with the third subparagraph of Article 53(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012.

☐ Amendment to the product specification of registered PDO or PGI for which a single document (or equivalent) has not been published not to be qualified as minor in accordance with the third subparagraph of Article 53(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012.

5. **Amendment(s)**

The proposed amendments are due to the need to adapt the product specification to the physical characteristics of the protected cheeses, the reality of the production processes, the production periods, the Inspection Body and Standard UNE-EN ISO/IEC 17065:2012.

The purpose of the amendments is to strengthen the link between the product and the surrounding environment, while maintaining the authenticity, quality and properties of the end product and ensuring it is eligible for accreditation.

5.1. ***Physical characteristics***

This amendment concerns Section B), Description of the product, of the product specification and Section 3.2), Description of the product, of the Single Document.

The current wording:

'When matured, the cheese has the following characteristics:

Physical and chemical characteristics:

Minimum dry matter:	57 %
Minimum fat content of dry matter:	45 %
Minimum protein content of dry matter:	35 %

Physical and organoleptic properties:

Type and presentation: Hard to semi-hard, matured to cured or semi-cured.

Form: An irregular discoid cylinder, with one face bearing floral or geometrical markings, symbols or the producer's name. Some 10-20 cm in diameter and 4-7 cm in height.

Weight: Between 250 and 1 000 grams.

Rind: Smooth, fine and almost non-existent because, after repeated kneading, the cheese matures uniformly and at the same rate inside and out. Its exterior and interior form a compact, bound mass, which is clean, dry and slightly oily. It is dark creamy-yellow in colour, with shades of white. Imprinted in bas-relief on the upper side is the producer's individual stamp.

Body: Firm, friable, hard to semi-hard, yellowish colour, no eyes, although it may have small cracks; crumbly when cut; buttery feel on the palate; homogeneous and plastic consistency.

Aroma: Strong and potent.

Taste: Depends on the production method, particularly the number of times it is kneaded in the kneading machine: if kneaded heavily, it has a pungent, tangy, strong flavour, an acquired taste, with the penetrating, rustic aroma of butter seasoned by time; if kneaded less heavily, the flavour is the same but less intense. In any event, it has a strong, broad, persistent, tangy flavour, slightly bitter at the back of the mouth, with a strong aftertaste.

Microbiological characteristics:

Will be adapted to the requirements in the rules in force.'

has been amended to read:

'When matured, the cheese has the following characteristics:

Physical and chemical characteristics:

Minimum dry matter:	57 %
Minimum fat content of dry matter:	45 %
Minimum protein content of dry matter:	35 %

Physical and organoleptic properties:

Type and presentation: Hard to semi-hard, matured to cured or semi-cured.

Form: An irregular discoid cylinder, with one face bearing floral or geometrical markings, symbols or the producer's name. Up to 20 cm in diameter and up to 7 cm in height.

Weight: Between 150 grams and 1 000 grams.

Rind: Smooth, fine and almost non-existent because, after repeated kneading, the cheese matures uniformly and at the same rate inside and out. Its exterior and interior form a compact, bound mass, which is clean, dry and slightly oily. It is dark creamy-yellow in colour, with shades of white. Imprinted in bas-relief on the upper side is the producer's individual stamp.

Body: Firm, friable, hard to semi-hard, yellowish colour, no eyes, although it may have small cracks; crumbly when cut; buttery feel on the palate; homogeneous and plastic consistency.

Aroma: Strong and potent.

Taste: Depends on the production method, particularly the number of times it is kneaded in the kneading machine: if kneaded heavily, it has a pungent, tangy, strong flavour, with the penetrating, rustic aroma of butter seasoned by time; if kneaded less heavily, the flavour is the same but less intense. In any event, it has a strong, broad, persistent, tangy flavour, slightly bitter at the back of the mouth, with a strong aftertaste.'

Reason: this amendment is being proposed due to the need to establish measurable and non-subjective organoleptic descriptors and to include smaller cheese production sizes, resulting from the current requirements of restaurateurs, who require smaller formats for consumption, which are not already included in the product specification, thus making it possible to monitor them.

A study has been carried out on the characteristics of the new cheese formats, which concludes that when the product weighs less than 250 g (150 g), it has no effect on the physical, chemical and organoleptic characteristics, giving scores above 55 points in all the samples assessed (suitable product); therefore, the physical, chemical and organoleptic characteristics are not directly linked to the product's weight.

This change does not have any impact on the essential characteristics and authenticity of the PDO product.

5.2. ***Geographical area***

This amendment concerns section C ('Geographical Area'), of the product specification.

Amendment to the fourth paragraph:

The following text:

'They are located in the central eastern part of Asturias, with a geographical area of 66 068 ha, of which a total of 21 642 ha is used for pasture.'

has been amended to read:

'They are located in the central eastern part of Asturias, with a geographical area of 66 068 ha.'

Reason: the deletion of the number of hectares used for pasture from the geographical area is being proposed because the area used for pasture varies over time. This deletion does not affect the essential characteristics of the product or the authenticity of the product covered by the Protected Designation of Origin.

5.3. ***Evidence that the product originates in the area***

This amendment concerns section D ('Proof that the product originated in the area') in the product specification.

Compliance with Standard UNE-EN ISO/IEC 17065. Control functions not associated with the Regulatory Council understood to be the management authority.

It is proposed that the inspection functions of the Regulatory Council be amended. These control activities should be delegated by the Competent Authority to the Control Body, in accordance with Article 36 of Law 2/2019 of Asturias, of 1 March 2019, on food quality, differentiated quality and direct sales of food products. Paragraphs affected by the application for amendment: first, fourth, fifth, sixth, eighth, thirteenth, fourteenth, fifteenth, sixteenth, seventeenth, eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth.

Amendment to the first paragraph:

The following text:

'In order to verify that the product originates in the area and complies with the requirements laid down in the product specification, the Inspection Body of the Regulatory Council shall carry out regular inspections of the cheese dairies and milk suppliers and ensure traceability.'

has been amended to read:

'In order to verify that the product originates in the area and complies with the requirements laid down in the product specification, the Control Body of the Regulatory Council shall carry out regular inspections of the cheese dairies and farmers and ensure traceability.'

Reason: amendment to adapt the system in view of the Control Body tasks delegated pursuant to Standard UNE-EN ISO/IEC 17065 and the registers defined in the new statutes of the Management Body for the PDO 'Queso Casín' approved on 11 August 2020. The amendments have no impact on the product's characteristics.

Amendment to the fourth paragraph:

The following text:

'In order to ensure that the milk comes from the area, the Council establishes a register of suppliers, including farmers supplying milk to cheese dairies directly and suppliers that operate collection routes based on an itinerary. All data relating to the collection route are recorded every day, using a computerised system, to show traceability from the holding of origin to unloading in the cheese dairy (farms of origin, quantity of milk, date and time of collection, destination of the milk, quantity, date and time of unloading).'

has been amended to read:

'In order to ensure that the milk comes from the area, the Council establishes a register of farms.'

Reason: amendment due to the differentiation between inspection activity and self-monitoring and to adapt the system accordingly to the delegation of the role of Control Body in accordance with the requirements of Standard UNE-EN ISO/IEC 17065 and the registers defined in the new statutes of the Management Body for the PDO 'Queso Casín' approved on 11 August 2020. The amendments have no impact on the product's characteristics.

Amendment to the fifth paragraph:

The following text:

'The Regulatory Council shall, through inspection and certification, verify that both the milk and its production practices conform to the standards in place.'

has been amended to read:

'The Control Body shall, through inspection and certification, verify that both the milk and its production practices conform to the standards in place.'

Reason: amendment to adapt the system in view of the Control Body tasks delegated pursuant to Standard UNE-EN ISO/IEC 17065. The amendments have no impact on the product's characteristics.

Amendment to the sixth paragraph:

The following text:

'Cheese dairies to be used for the production of the cheeses to be covered by the Regulatory Council, and the maturation and storage premises, must have been authorised by the latter and be listed in the corresponding register of premises authorised for that purpose, after they have complied with the requirements and checks laid down in this document.'

has been amended to read:

'Cheese dairies to be used for the production of the cheeses to be covered by the PDO, and the maturation and storage premises, must be listed in the corresponding register of premises authorised for that purpose, after they have complied with the requirements and checks laid down in this document.'

Reason: amendment to adapt the system in view of the Control Body tasks delegated pursuant to Standard UNE-EN ISO/IEC 17065. The amendments have no impact on the product's characteristics.

Amendment to the eighth paragraph:

The following text:

'As a minimum requirement, they shall keep the following records, which shall be checked by the Control Body of the Regulatory Council.'

has been amended to read:

'As a minimum requirement, they shall keep the following records, which shall be checked by the Control Body.'

Reason: amendment to adapt the system in view of the Control Body tasks delegated pursuant to Standard UNE-EN ISO/IEC 17065. The amendments have no impact on the product's characteristics.

Amendment to the ninth paragraph:

The following text:

'Register of raw materials: this contains information on the origin, date and quantities received. These data shall be supported by the relevant documentation which, in the case of milk, shall be determined by invoices and unloading notes, the information from which shall be consistent with that set out in the journey logs of the vehicle which collects and delivers the milk.'

has been amended to read:

'Register of raw materials: this contains information on the origin, date and quantities received. These data shall be supported by the relevant documentation which, in the case of milk, may be invoices or milk delivery notes.'

Reason: the change is being proposed to adapt to a product certification system in line with the product specification for the Protected Designation of Origin 'Queso Casín', in accordance with Standard UNE-EN ISO/IEC 17065.

The earlier paragraph sets out the verification method too specifically, which may render the system of checks redundant. Provided that traceability control is ensured, the Control Body may carry out checks in various ways, based on the availability of information.

Amendment to the thirteenth paragraph:

The following text:

'The Regulatory Board, through its Control Body, shall determine the suitability of the cheeses covered by the PDO, which can only be those that meet the requirements approved and laid down in the product specification.'

has been amended to read:

'The Control Body shall verify the suitability of the cheeses covered by the PDO, which can only be those that meet the requirements approved and laid down in the product specification.'

Reason: amendment due to the differentiation between inspection activity and self-monitoring and the corresponding adaptation of the system to the functions delegated as an inspection body in accordance with the requirements of Standard UNE-EN ISO/IEC 17065. The amendments have no impact on the product's characteristics.

Amendment to the fourteenth paragraph:

The following text:

'The Regulatory Council shall monitor and ensure the identification and provenance of the products by affixing a numbered secondary label issued and approved by it. It shall provide the necessary amount of numbered secondary labels, depending on the number of cheeses certified.'

has been amended to read:

'The Control Body shall verify the identification and provenance of the products by checking that a numbered secondary label issued and approved by the Regulatory Council has been affixed to the cheese. The Regulatory Council shall provide the necessary amount of numbered secondary labels, depending on the number of cheeses qualified by the operator.'

Reason: amendment due to the differentiation between inspection activity and self-monitoring and the corresponding adaptation of the system to the functions delegated as an inspection body in accordance with the requirements of Standard UNE-EN ISO/IEC 17065. The amendments have no impact on the product's characteristics.

Amendment to the fifteenth paragraph:

The following text:

'The Regulatory Council shall carry out regular inspections of the farms and cheese dairies to verify that the conditions which led to the granting of the certification are maintained, and therefore to grant continued use of the Protected Designation of Origin "Queso Casín". It shall also regularly take samples of raw materials at farms and of raw materials and products at cheese dairies.'

has been amended to read:

'The Control Body shall carry out regular checks on the farms and cheese dairies to verify that the conditions which led to the granting of the certification are maintained, and therefore to grant continued use of the Protected Designation of Origin "Queso Casín". It shall also regularly take samples of raw materials at farms and of raw materials and qualified products at cheese dairies.'

Reason: amendment to adapt the system in view of the Control Body tasks delegated pursuant to Standard UNE-EN ISO/IEC 17065. The amendments have no impact on the product's characteristics.

Amendment to the sixteenth paragraph:

The following text:

'Operators whose products conform to the conditions laid down will receive a certificate of compliance from the Regulatory Council bearing the signature of the President of the Council.'

has been amended to read:

'Operators whose products conform to the conditions laid down will receive a certificate of compliance from the Control Body.'

Reason: in order to ensure the impartiality of the Control Body throughout the decision-making process, it is being proposed that the paragraph concerning the functions of the President of the Council be amended, with the Control Body being, in accordance with Standard UNE-EN ISO/IEC 17065, responsible for appointing the person to hold this position.

Deletion of the table of checks carried out by the Regulatory Council, and of the following paragraph:

'The following table shows the checks to be carried out by the Regulatory Council in relation to the various operators to verify that the cheeses to be marketed under the PDO "Queso Casín" originate in the area. These checks shall consist of inspections during which a visual check, a documentary inspection and the corresponding sampling shall be carried out.'

Reason: the deletion is being proposed to adapt to a product certification system in line with the Product Specification for the Protected Designation of Origin 'Queso Casín', in accordance with Standard UNE-EN ISO/IEC 17065.

Amendment to the eighteenth paragraph:

The following text:

'In order to be able to monitor the production processes used for the cheeses and to prove the origin and quality of the product covered by the PDO, the operators responsible for the farms, cheese dairies and maturation and storage facilities are required to complete the necessary documentary evidence for each of the requirements set out in this document. These documents and records will be checked by the Regulatory Council.'

has been amended to read:

'In order to be able to monitor the production processes used for the cheeses and to prove the origin and quality of the product covered by the PDO, the operators responsible for the farms, cheese dairies and maturation and storage facilities are required to complete records that demonstrate compliance with each of the requirements set out in this document. These documents and records will be checked by the Control Body.'

Reason: amendment to adapt the system in view of the Control Body tasks delegated pursuant to Standard UNE-EN ISO/IEC 17065. The amendments have no impact on the product's characteristics.

Amendment to the nineteenth paragraph:

The following text:

'In accordance with all the aforementioned requirements, the Protected Designation of Origin "Queso Casín" may be applied only to cheeses obtained from milk supplied by registered suppliers and produced in cheese dairies listed in the register held by the Regulatory Council, in accordance with the standards laid down in this document.'

has been amended to read:

'In accordance with all the aforementioned requirements, the Protected Designation of Origin "Queso Casín" may be applied only to cheeses obtained from milk supplied by registered farmers and produced in cheese dairies listed in the register held by the Regulatory Council, in accordance with the standards laid down in this document, and which have been assessed and certified by the Control Body in accordance with the established checks.'

Reason: amendment to adapt the system in view of the Control Body tasks delegated pursuant to Standard UNE-EN ISO/IEC 17065 and the registers defined in the new statutes of the Management Body for the PDO 'Queso Casín' approved on 11 August 2020. The amendments have no impact on the product's characteristics.

Amendment to the twentieth paragraph:

The following text:

'Non-conformity of the product or of its production techniques may be detected by the Regulatory Council at any stage'.

has been amended to read:

'Non-conformity of the product or of its production techniques may be detected by the Control Body at any stage'.

Reason: amendment to adapt the system in view of the Control Body tasks delegated pursuant to Standard UNE-EN ISO/IEC 17065. The amendments have no impact on the product's characteristics.

5.4. ***Method of production***

This amendment concerns section E of the product specification ('Method of Production'); and points 3.3 ('Feed'), 3.4 ('Raw materials') and 3.7 ('Specific rules concerning labelling') of the current single document; and points 3.3 ('Feed and raw materials') and 3.6 ('Specific rules concerning labelling') of the proposal for a single document adapted to the structure of Annex I to Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 668/2014 ([2]) in which points 3.3 and 3.4 are merged, meaning that the numbering of the single document will be affected as of point 3.3 after adapting the drafting.

Amendment to the first point:

The following text:

'Origin and characteristics of the milk. The milk used to produce the protected cheeses shall be supplied by suppliers listed in the corresponding register of the Regulatory Council.'

has been amended to read:

'Origin and characteristics of the milk: The milk used to produce the protected cheeses shall be supplied by the farmers listed in the corresponding Register of the Regulatory Council and assessed by the Control Body.'

Reason: amendment to adapt the system in view of the Control Body tasks delegated pursuant to Standard UNE-EN ISO/IEC 17065 and the registers defined in the new statutes of the Management Body for the PDO 'Queso Casín' approved on 11 August 2020. The amendments have no impact on the product's characteristics.

Amendment to the second point:

The following text:

'Feed of the cattle that produce the milk. The feed is based directly on the area's natural resources, from pasture-grazing practically all year round, complemented by hay and fresh fodder from the producer's own farm, with the adoption of a rotational system for using the pastures. These are small, family-type farms with low livestock headcounts where concern for the livestock's welfare is paramount, with the livestock remaining in the stables only for milking and overnight.

Their feed thus originates in the defined geographical area. Exceptionally, when fodder from the farm itself is scarce, due to adverse weather conditions, their rations may be supplemented by small quantities of externally produced cereals and legumes.'

has been amended to read:

'Feed of the cattle that produce the milk: The feed is based directly on the area's natural resources, through grazing supplemented by fresh and preserved fodder, cereals and legumes.'

Reason: it is proposed that the feeding of the livestock be adapted, as a determining factor in the production of the product, in accordance with Article 1(1) of Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No 664/2014 ([3]), supplementing Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council. This amendment does not alter the essential characteristics and authenticity of the product covered by the Protected Designation of Origin.

([2]) OJ L 179, 19.6.2014, p. 36.
([3]) OJ L 179, 19.6.2014, p. 17.

Amendment of the third point:

The following text:

'Milk coagulation: Coagulation is enzymatic, triggered by using calf-based rennet or coagulant as well as fermenting agents and calcium chloride in the exact dose required for producing the curd in the curdling vat. The process is carried out at a temperature of 30-35 ºC for about 45 minutes, after which the curd is cut with curd knives. The temperature is raised about 2 ºC and, simultaneously, the curds are stirred for at least ten minutes until they form grains the size of hazelnuts. They are then left to rest for a further ten minutes at least.'

has been amended to read:

'Milk coagulation: Coagulation is enzymatic, triggered by using calf-based rennet or coagulant as well as fermenting agents and, optionally, calcium chloride in the exact dose required for producing the curd in the curdling vat. The process is carried out at a temperature of 30-35 ºC for about 45 minutes, after which the curd is cut with curd knives. The temperature is raised about 2 ºC and, simultaneously, the curds are stirred for at least ten minutes until they form grains the size of hazelnuts. They are then left to rest for a further ten minutes at least.'

Reason: this amendment is being proposed because the use of calcium chloride is optional. This amendment does not alter the essential characteristics and authenticity of the product covered by the Protected Designation of Origin.

Amendment to the fourth point:

The following text:

'Draining of curds. The curds are then left to drain in cloths or drainers (plastic containers with holes) for several hours to allow the serum to run off. The process continues in the airing room, where the curds are left on cloths at a temperature of 15-20 ºC for three days or more. They are turned every day until all the serum has drained away. Lactic fermentation also takes place during this time.'

has been amended to read:

'Draining of curds: The curds are then left to drain in cloths or drainers for several hours to allow the serum to run off. The process continues in the airing room, where the curds are left on cloths or drainers, at a temperature of 14-20 ºC for three days or more. They are turned every day until all the serum has drained away. Lactic fermentation also takes place during this time.'

Reason: amendment due to the adaptation of the materials and equipment currently used for draining.

A supporting study has been carried out, which concludes that when the product is produced under different production conditions, it has no effect on the physical, chemical and organoleptic characteristics, giving scores above 55 in all the samples assessed (suitable product).

Therefore, the physical, chemical and organoleptic characteristics are not directly linked to the variation in the maturation conditions in the range studied, and do not significantly affect them.

This amendment does not alter the essential characteristics and authenticity of the product covered by the Protected Designation of Origin.

Amendment to the fifth point:

The following text:

'Kneading. Next, the machine kneading process begins and part of the salt is added. To achieve greater uniformity, the paste is kneaded several times in a machine consisting of two motor-driven rollers that turn in opposite directions. Salt is added during some of the kneading cycles. The cheeses are shaped by hand by forming the curds (known as "gorollos") into a cut-off pyramid and they are then stored in an airing chamber for a period of between five days and two weeks at 15-20 ºC. The cheeses are turned every day. The "gorollos" can be kneaded in the machine as many times as needed to achieve the desired texture for each producer.

The more kneading cycles the cheese undergoes, the smoother and more uniform it will be, it will cure better and have a stronger flavour.

The cheese is finally shaped into either a discoid cylinder- or a cake (the latter is achieved by first making a ball and then flattening each face until it takes on the desired appearance) and the top face is marked with a seal or stamp with the producer's logo. The cheese then returns to the airing chamber for at least two days. The marcu Casín stamp not only identifies the cheese but also enhances its appearance and occupies the entire visible top face of the cheese.'

has been amended to read:

'Kneading of the product: the paste is kneaded several times in a kneading machine. Salt is added during some of the kneading cycles. The cheeses are shaped by hand by forming the curds (known as "gorollos") into a cut-off pyramid and they are then stored in an airing chamber for a period of between five days and two weeks at 14-20 °C. The "gorollos" can be kneaded in the machine as many times as required for achieving the desired texture for each producer.

The more kneading cycles the cheese undergoes, the smoother and more uniform it will be, it will cure better and have a stronger flavour.

The cheese is finally shaped as either a discoid cylinder or a cake by hand and the top face is marked with a seal or stamp with the producer's logo. The cheese then returns to the airing chamber for at least one day. The marcu Casín stamp not only identifies the cheese but also enhances its appearance and occupies the entire visible top face of the cheese.'

Reason: amendment due to the adaptation of the kneading system, equipment used, temperature and airing times.

A supporting study has been carried out, which concludes that when the product is produced under different production conditions, it has no effect on the physical, chemical and organoleptic characteristics, giving scores above 55 in all the samples assessed (suitable product).

Therefore, the physical, chemical and organoleptic characteristics are not directly linked to the variation in the maturation conditions in the range studied, and do not significantly affect them.

This amendment does not alter the essential characteristics and authenticity of the product covered by the Protected Designation of Origin.

Amendment to the sixth point:

The following text:

'Maturation: The curing or maturation process is completed in the maturation chamber at a temperature of 8-10 °C at 80 % humidity.

The maturation process starts at the moment in which the curds are produced and should last at least two months, counting from the date on which they were made. During this period, the cheeses are turned and cleaned as required, so they acquire their distinctive features. During the maturation process, a series of physical and chemical changes occur, giving the cheese its final organoleptic properties. The most important of these, apart from the loss of water by evaporation, include the degradation of proteins into amino acids and of fats into volatile substances, which will give rise, respectively, to the basis of the taste and smell of the cheese.'

has been amended to read:

'Maturation: The curing or maturation process is completed in the maturation chamber at a temperature of 6-12 °C, at 75-85 % humidity.

The maturation process starts at the moment in which the curds are produced and should last at least 60 days, counting from the date on which they were made. During this period, the cheeses are turned and cleaned as required, so they acquire their distinctive features. During the maturation process, a series of physical and chemical changes occur, giving the cheese its final organoleptic properties. The most important of these, apart from the loss of water by evaporation, include the degradation of proteins into amino acids and of fats into volatile substances, which will give rise, respectively, to the basis of the taste and smell of the cheese.'

Reason: It is proposed that the conditions regarding the temperature and maturation period for the curds be amended.

A supporting study has been carried out, which concludes that when the product is produced under different production conditions, it has no effect on the physical, chemical and organoleptic characteristics, giving scores above 55 in all the samples assessed (suitable product).

Therefore, the physical, chemical and organoleptic characteristics are not directly linked to the variation in the maturation conditions in the range studied, and do not significantly affect them.

This amendment does not alter the essential characteristics and authenticity of the product covered by the Protected Designation of Origin.

Deletion of the seventh point:

'Packaging and labelling: The labelling will be adapted to conform at all times to the general rules governing the labelling, presentation and advertising of foodstuffs.'

Reason: amendment, because it does not contain obligatory rules specific to the PDO. The amendments have no impact on the product's characteristics.

5.5. ***Human link***

This amendment concerns section F ('Link with the geographical environment'), Human link, of the product specification.

Amendment to paragraph 4

The following text:

'But above all, the human link is implicit in the essence of this product, especially when talking about its exclusive method of production. At present, production of the cheese continues to be purely artisanal and very labour-intensive, resulting in low production that jeopardised its survival. The main factor that contributed to its preservation was the work of the women who produced the cheese for domestic consumption and the enthusiasm of the sole producer who nowadays exhibits and markets the product at fairs and markets for traditional products throughout Asturias and the rest of Spain. Another important factor was the cooperation of local rural development groups.'

has been amended to read:

'But above all, the human link is implicit in the essence of this product, especially when talking about its exclusive method of production. At present, production of the cheese continues to be purely artisanal and very labour-intensive, resulting in low production that jeopardised its survival. The main factor that contributed to its preservation was the work of the women who produced the cheese for domestic consumption and the enthusiasm of a sole producer who, for a long time, was the only one who exhibited and marketed the product at fairs and markets for traditional products throughout Asturias and the rest of Spain. Another important factor was the cooperation of local rural development groups.'

Reason: this amendment is proposed due to the fact that there are currently three dairies that make the cheese. The amendment has no impact on the product's characteristics.

5.6. ***Control body***

This amendment concerns section G ('Checks on compliance with the product specification') of the product specification.

The current wording:

'Checks on compliance with the product specification.

Name: Directorate-General for Livestock and Agri-Food of Asturias

Address: C/ Coronel Aranda, No 2 – 33005 – Oviedo – Asturias – Spain

Tel. + 34 985105612. Fax +34 985105517

The Regulatory Council shall carry out certification, monitoring and control functions in accordance with the criteria laid down in European Standard UNE-EN 45011.

The Directorate-General for Livestock and Agri-Food shall be responsible for carrying out these functions on a transitional basis until the Regulatory Council is set up.'

has been amended to read:

'The competent authority for control is the Directorate-General from the Asturian Government whose remit includes agri-food matters.

Control may be delegated to an entity acting as a product certification body and accredited under Standard UNE-EN ISO/IEC 17065, or any standard that may replace it in the future.'

Reason: this amendment is proposed to update the address of the Control Body; as well as for the adaptation of the Regulatory Council and its Control Body on the basis of Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 21 November 2012 on quality schemes for agricultural products and foodstuffs and Law of Asturias 2/2019, of 1 March 2019, on food quality, differentiated quality and direct sale of food products (Article 36).

5.7. ***Labelling***

This amendment concerns section H ('Labelling') of the product specification; point 3.7 ('Specific rules concerning labelling') of the current single document; and point 3.6 ('Specific rules concerning labelling') of the proposal for a single document adapted to the structure of Annex I to Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 668/2014 in which points 3.3 and 3.4 are merged, meaning that the numbering of the single document will be affected as of point 3.3 after adapting that structure.

Amendment to paragraph 1:

The current wording:

'"Queso Casín" PDO cheeses intended for consumption, must – in addition to complying with the labelling rules laid down in the legislation – be identified with a special numbered secondary label, which guarantees the identity of the producer.'

has been amended to read:

'"Queso Casín" PDO cheeses intended for consumption, must be identified with a special numbered secondary label, which guarantees the identity of the producer.'

Reason: amendment, because it does not contain obligatory rules specific to the PDO. The amendments have no impact on the product's characteristics.

Amendment to paragraph 3:

The current wording:

'Trade marks, emblems, symbols, advertising slogans or any other type of advertising used on the protected product may not be used, even by the owners themselves, in the marketing of cheeses not covered by the PDO, nor may they be used in such a way as to potentially mislead consumers.'

has been amended to read:

'The commercial labels, specific to each cheese dairy, must be submitted to the Regulatory Council.'

Reason: amendment due to the corresponding adaptation to the legislation in force. The amendments have no impact on the product's characteristics.

5.8. ***Deletion of national legislative requirements***

Deletion of Section I. National requirements.

The following documents are repealed:

— Law 25/1970, of 2 December 1970, on vineyards, wine and alcohol.

— Decree 835/1972, of 23 March 1972, laying down rules of application for Law 25/1970.

— Law 24/2003, of 10 July 2003, on vineyards and wine.

— Order of 25 January 1994 specifying the correspondence between Spanish legislation and Regulation (EC) No 2081/92 on the protection of geographical indications and designations of origin for agricultural products and foodstuffs.

— Royal Decree 1414/2005, of 25 November 2005, on the procedure for the processing of applications for entry in the Community Register of Protected Designations of Origin and Protected Geographical Indications and opposition thereto.

Reason: it is proposed that Section I of the current Product Specification be deleted in accordance with Article 7 of Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 21 November 2012 on quality schemes for agricultural products and foodstuffs, and because of the repeal of the documents referred to.

SINGLE DOCUMENT

'Queso Casín'

EC No: PDO-ES-0178-AM01— 24.9.2021

PDO (X) PGI ( )

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

'Queso Casín'

2. **Member State or third country**

Spain

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

3.1. ***Type of product***

Class 1.3 Cheeses

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

Full-fat, hard or semi-hard mature cheese made from whole, unpasteurised cow's milk, by means of enzymatic coagulation and kneading the resulting paste.

When matured, the cheese has the following characteristics:

Physical and chemical characteristics:

— Dry matter: at least 57 %

— Minimum fat content of dry matter: 45 %

— Minimum protein content of dry matter: 35 %

Physical and organoleptic properties:

— Type and presentation: Hard to semi-hard, matured to cured or semi-cured.

— Form: An irregular discoid cylinder, with one face bearing floral or geometrical markings, symbols or the producer's name. Up to 20 cm in diameter and up to 7 cm in height.

— Weight: Between 150 grams and 1 000 grams.

— Rind: Smooth, fine and almost non-existent because, after repeated kneading, the cheese matures uniformly and at the same rate inside and out. Its exterior and interior form a compact, bound mass, which is clean, dry and slightly oily. It is dark creamy-yellow in colour, with shades of white. Imprinted in bas-relief on the top face is the producer's individual stamp.

— Body: Firm, friable, hard to semi-hard, yellowish colour, no eyes, although it may have small cracks. Crumbly when cut. Buttery feel on the palate. Homogeneous and pliable consistency.

— Aroma Strong and potent.

— Taste: Depends on the production method, particularly the number of times it is kneaded in the kneading machine: if kneaded heavily, it has a bitter, tangy, strong flavour, with the penetrating, rustic aroma of butter seasoned by time; if kneaded less heavily, the flavour is the same but less intense. In any event, it has a strong, broad, persistent, tangy flavour, slightly bitter at the back of the mouth, with a strong aftertaste.

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

A) *Feed*

The feed of the cattle that produce the milk used as the raw material for producing 'Queso Casín' is based directly on the area's natural resources, through grazing supplemented by fresh and preserved fodder, cereals and legumes.

B) *Raw materials*

Cow's milk, lactic ferments, rennet, salt, and optionally calcium chloride.

The milk used for producing the protected cheeses comes from healthy cows of the Asturiana de la Montaña o Casina, Asturiana de los Valles and Frisona breeds and crosses thereof.

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

All the processes necessary for obtaining 'Queso Casín', producing the milk, making the cheese (coagulation, draining and kneading), maturation and packaging take place in the identified geographical area, which includes the municipalities of Caso, Sobrescopio and Piloña.

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

Packaging – To safeguard the product's quality, it is packaged on the premises where it is made or matured before distribution as its fine, thin, almost non-existent rind makes it more susceptible to contamination and changes in its external appearance.

Furthermore, for the same reason, this cheese can be eaten whole, which means it must be pre-packaged.

The permitted materials for its packaging are paper, cardboard, wood or plastic, for food use or other uses authorised by the Regulatory Council.

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

As well as each producer's individual label, the protected cheeses will bear a specific numbered secondary label to safeguard the product's identity.

The label of the protected cheeses must clearly indicate the words 'Denominación de Origen Protegida "Queso Casín"' – and the logo, which will be unique, with four colour options, for all operators who market cheeses protected by the PDO. They are reproduced below.



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

The defined geographical area for the production of milk and the manufacture, maturation and packaging of the PDO 'Queso Casín' cheeses is situated in the south of the Asturias region, in the mid-east to be precise. The geographical area comprises the following municipalities: Caso, Sobrescobio and Piloña.

5. **Link with the geographical area**

5.1. ***Specific nature of the geographical area***

It is defined by its belonging to the area of the central eastern Asturian mountains, a landscape characterised by narrow valleys separated by wide rocky crests. The area's mountainous nature means that steep slopes predominate for the greater part. The medium-high altitudes converge on a depressed central plain area, part of the prelitoral depression that runs from east to west and serves as the riverbed for the Piloña. That river and the Alto Nalón are the area's two biggest rivers.

Apart from the highest mountain heights, this area enjoys an oceanic climate, temperate with mild rains, though persistent throughout the year, and a moderate thermal fluctuation.

This landscape of valleys or river basins surrounded by mountains also gives rise to abundant and persistent fogs. All these processes cause a notable reduction of sunshine throughout the year.

The countryside's vegetation is defined by the presence of abundant meadows for hay and pasture, as well as a large expanse of woods and scrubland areas and rocky outcrops on the steepest slopes.

The most interesting species that cover the meadows and pastures belong to the families of grasses and legumes.

It was in these conditions that the technique for making 'Queso Casín' developed, in response to the need to find a safe and lasting means of conservation in an area where the mild temperatures and the predominance of rainy and cloudy days confer a high degree of atmospheric humidity, making it difficult to dry the curds produced when the milk coagulates.

'Kneading' emerged as the habitual and only way to bind together the various small curds into one piece. Repeating this process produced a drier and more compact mass, from which a more durable product could be obtained. Moreover, it allowed salt to be added to the mass in a homogeneous form and the even spread of microorganisms which appeared during fermentation, thereby facilitating the necessary maturation, all of which gave the product specific organoleptic characteristics.

The kneading was done by hand until a specific mechanism was developed for it, namely the kneading machine or table which appears to have been an adaptation of a tool used in traditional bread-making, known as the 'bregadora' or 'bregadera', and which was used on a communal basis – the 'diis d'amasar' – so as to make the scarce material resources profitable and improve production, though it still remained laborious.

This work involved processing semi-processed curds ('gorollos') and cheeses from different producers, which had to be distinguishable from each other. The solution was to mark each piece with a characteristic stamp to make it quick and easy to identify its owner. A cylindrical or fusiform wooden tool with simple symbols set on the ends – known as an 'ochavau' – was used to mark the semi-processed curds, one mark stamped onto each mass produced. The 'marcu' or 'cuñu' was used to mark the finished cheeses. This was a bigger and more elaborate wooden tool, with a variety of finely decorated stamps used to indicate the producer. Nowadays it is common for the 'marcu' to bear the producer's name.

Probably owing to its complexity, this production method – particularly the kneading – remains the exclusive preserve of this variety of cheese. The main factor that contributed to its preservation was the work of the women who produced the cheese for domestic consumption and the enthusiasm of one producer who, for a long time, was the only one who exhibited and marketed the product at fairs and markets for traditional products throughout Asturias and the rest of Spain. Another important factor was the cooperation of local rural development groups.

5.2. ***Specificity of the product***

'Queso Casín' can be identified externally by the peculiar appearance given to it by the seal with each producer's own logo, stamped with a die ('marcu') marking the whole of the top face of each cheese.

The specific character of this cheese has been described: its irregular discoid cylinder shape; its smooth, fine, almost imperceptible rind which forms a compact mass with the inside; its kneaded body; its strong, persistent flavour and aroma that grow every time the curd is kneaded by the kneading machine; its composition that makes it one of Spain's (and the world's) driest and most protein-rich cheeses.

This cheese is completely different from all the other varieties produced, including those produced in neighbouring municipalities. Caso's border with the municipality of Pongo is defined by a series of mountainous ranges, which also represents the division between two types of classic Asturian cheeses – 'Casín' and the cheese from Los Beyos – and takes on a special relevance here.

Historical study provides documentary evidence of the importance of 'Queso Casín'.

In 'En el país de los 100 quesos' [In the Land of 100 Cheeses], Barcelona 2000, Enric Canut claims that 'with the way it is produced and the crude tools used, "Queso Casín" may be one of the oldest cheeses in Spain'.

Written accounts of the cheese, by specific populations of the area, date back to the 14th century. 'The abbess D[a] Gontrodo, leasing the *mansos* of San Salvador de Sobrecastiello in 1328 for seven years at a price of 70 *maravedís* to be paid every first of September, and "kneaded cheeses" to be paid every [feast day of] San Martín in November.'

In 1341, idem., 'and good kneaded cheeses.'

There are references to this cheese in the writings of Jovellanos (18th century); in the 'Diccionario Geográfico de Madoz' [Geographical dictionary of Madoz], published at the beginning of the 19th century, and in the 'Curso de Agricultura Elemental' [Elementary agricultural course book] by Dionisio Martín Ayuso, published at the end of the 19th century.

In 'Asturias' by O. Bellmut and Fermin Canella (Gijón, 1900), the cheese from Caso is cited as one of the most famous cheeses to have crossed the borders of Asturias. In the same vein, it appears in 'Los Elementos de Agricultura y Técnica Agrícola e Industrial', F. Requejo and M. Tortosa (Madrid, 1903).

The book 'Comer en Asturias' [Eating in Asturias] (Madrid, 1980) by Eduardo Méndez Riestra mentions 'Queso Casín' among those cheeses produced in Asturias, as does Carlos Mero González, in his 'Guía Práctica de los quesos de España' [Practical Guide to the Cheeses of Spain] (Madrid, 1983) and Simone Ortega in 'Tabla de quesos españoles' [Table of Spanish Cheeses] (Madrid, 1983).

'El Gran Libro de la Cocina Asturiana' [The Big Book of Asturian Cooking] by chemist and writer J. A. Fidalgo Sánchez (Gijón, 1986) claims that 'Queso Casín' is the cheese most representative of the central southern region of Asturias.

5.3. ***Causal link between the geographical area and the quality or characteristics of the product (for PDOs)***

The mountainous topography was the main factor in determining that the surplus milk should be used to make cheese, as the constraints imposed by the poor communications meant that milk could only be used for the production of cheese and butter.

It was a combination of all the natural elements that led to the production of this specific type of cheese. On the one hand, the topography has resulted in a landscape of low meadows and mountain pastures with an extraordinary diversity of flora and vegetation, which have a direct bearing on the diet of the cattle that produce the milk and allow these resources to be exploited using traditional methods.

On the other hand, the climate and the abundant, gentle rain evenly spread throughout the year, the lack of sunshine and the moderate temperatures are ideal for ensuring local fodder production and for keeping cattle in the pastures.

All the milk used to make 'Queso Casín' comes from cows that graze regularly on the area's meadows and pastures throughout the year.

The first makers of this cheese were the farmers of yore who developed a production method in keeping with the constraints imposed by the area's environmental conditions so as to lengthen the time they could keep a perishable product, giving rise to a unique variety of cheese, the characteristics of which are a result of, and determined by, a combination of the natural elements and the particular production method.

Reference to publication of the product specification

https://www.asturias.es/documents/217090/555882/Queso+Casin+pliego+definitivo+sin+control+%28pdf%29.pdf/c1953105-46f9-028e-5f6d-10a0f4b3bbb6?t=1632377515156