C/2025/634

29.1.2025

Publication of an application for registration of a name 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

(C/2025/634)

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

'Pérail'

EU No: PGI-FR-03053 – 5.1.2024

PDO ( ) PGI (X)

1. **Name(s)**

'Pérail'

2. **Member State or Third Country**

France

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

3.1. *Type of product*

Class 1.3. Cheeses

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) refers*

'Pérail' is a cheese made exclusively from whole milk from Lacaune sheep.

It is a soft cheese with a round, flat shape. It is sold whole in two sizes:

— small, with a diameter of 78 mm to 88 mm, a height of 15 mm to 22 mm and a weight of at least 90 g,

— large, with a diameter of 90 mm to 110 mm, a height of 15 mm to 22 mm and a weight of at least 130 g.

Its dry matter content is at least 40 % and its fat content in dry matter is at least 50 %.

The cheese cannot be sold until 7 days after the renneting date.

'Pérail' has a thin, soft, melting skin, without rind, which is ivory-ecru in colour and is characterised by a slight bloom due to the development of the ripening flora, in particular *Geotrichum*.

[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 inside of the cheese is white to ivory-ecru in colour, soft to the touch, and cuts cleanly. It is melting, creamy and evenly textured in the mouth.

'Pérail' gives off aromas of milk and sheep's wool, as well as a slight smell of wool grease[*]. Its taste is characterised by flavours reminiscent of sheep, particularly wool grease and milky flavours ranging from curd to cream, with fresh and mild aromatic notes formed by the ripening flora, sometimes with a hint of dried fruit.

[*] Wool grease: greasy substance secreted by the skin of the sheep, and present on their wool

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

As soon as weather conditions allow, the dairy sheep are grazed daily when grass is available.

When the dairy sheep are in the fold, the individual daily ration comprises at least 1 kg of dry matter of hay per dairy sheep on average across the flock.

Therefore on average over the year, at least 70 % of the dry matter of the dairy flock's diet comes from the geographical area. The origin of the feed influences the composition of the milk, which in turn contributes to the organoleptic characteristics of 'Pérail'.

Only feed specified in a positive list is authorised in the dairy sheep's diet.

Only feed not labelled as genetically modified, or derived from products not labelled as genetically modified, is authorised in the dairy flock's feed.

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

The milk is produced and the cheeses manufactured and ripened in the geographical area.

The milk used to make 'Pérail' in the geographical area is produced according to the traditional agri-pastoral system using the local Lacaune breed. The breed is well suited to make the most of the area's food resources, from which it produces a milk rich in fat, the composition of which contributes to the characteristics of 'Pérail'.

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

'Pérail' is sold whole. 'Perail' may not be packaged under a modified atmosphere or vacuum-packed.

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

In addition to the compulsory information provided for by legislation on the labelling and presentation of foodstuffs, 'Pérail' cheese must be sold with labelling on the visible side showing:

— the name of the protected geographical indication 'Perail', displayed:

  — alone, on one line of the label,

  — in characters at least two-thirds the size of the largest characters on the label,

— following registration, the European Union PGI symbol in the same field of vision as the name,

— the ‘Identité Pérail’ collective figurative mark, reproduced below:



Irrespective of the regulatory terms applicable to all cheeses, the use of any determiner, adjective or other words qualifying or accompanying the protected geographical indication is prohibited on the labelling, with the exception of:

— specific brand names, trademarks or artisanal qualification logos, but such marks must not be used to circumvent the general prohibition and amount to a qualification of the protected geographical indication,

— the words ‘moulage manuel à la louche’ [‘ladled into the mould manually’].

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

Departement of Aveyron, cantons of Causse-Comtal, Causses-Rougiers, Millau-1, Millau-2, Monts du Réquistanais, Nord-Lévezou, Raspes et Lévezou, Rodez-1, Rodez-2, Rodez-Onet, Saint-Affrique and Tarn et Causses. Municipalities of Baraqueville, Bertholène, Bessuéjouls, Cabanès, Camboulazet, Camjac, Castanet, Centrès, Clairvaux-d’Aveyron, Crespin, Druelle Balsac, Espalion, Gaillac-d’Aveyron, Gramond, Laissac-Sévérac l’Eglise, Lassouts, Manhac, Marcillac-Vallon, Mayran, Meljac, Millau, Mouret, Muret-le-Château, Naucelle, Palmas d’Aveyron, Pierrefiche, Pomayrols, Quins, Saint Geniez d’Olt et d’Aubrac (only the territory of the delegated municipality of Saint-Geniez-d’Olt), Saint-Just-sur-Viaur, Sainte-Eulalie-d’Olt, Salles-la-Source, Tauriac-de-Naucelle, Valady and Vimenet. Department of Gard, municipalities of Alzon, Blandas, Campestre-et-Luc, Causse-Bégon, Lanuéjols, Montdardier, Revens, Rogues, Trèves and Vissec. Department of Hérault, municipalities of Avène, Cambon-et-Salvergues, Le Caylar, Ceilhes-et-Rocozels, Le Cros, Dio-et-Valquières, Fraïsse-sur-Agout, Joncels, Lavalette, Lunas, Les Rives, Romiguières, Roqueredonde, Saint-Félix-de-l’Heras, Saint-Maurice-Navacelles, Saint-Michel, La Salvetat-sur-Agout, Sorbs, Le Soulié and La Vacquerie-et-Saint-Martin-de-Castries. Department of Lozère, canton of La Canourgue. Municipalities of Balsiège, Barjac, Les Bondons, Bourgs sur Colagne, Brenoux, Cultures, Esclanèdes, Florac Trois Rivières (only the territory of the delegated municipality of Florac), Fraissinet-de-Fourques, Gatuzières, Gorges du Tarn Causses, Grèzes, Hures-la-Parade, Ispagnac, Lanuéjols, Marvejols, Mas-Saint-Chély, Mende, Meyrueis, Montrodat, Palhers, Le Rozier, Saint-Bauzile, Saint-Bonnet-de-Chirac, Saint-Étienne-du-Valdonnez, Saint-Germain-du-Teil, Saint-Pierre-de-Nogaret, Saint-Pierre-des-Tripiers, Les Salelles, Trélans and Vebron. Department of Tarn, municipalities of Alban, Ambialet, Andouque, Anglès, Arifat, Arthès (in part), Assac, Barre, Berlats, Le Bez, Brassac, Cadix, Cambounès, Courris, Crespin, Curvalle, Le Dourn, Espérausses, Faussergues, Fontrieu, Fraissines, Le Fraysse, Gijounet, Lacapelle-Escroux, Lacapelle-Pinet, Lacaune, Lacaze, Lamontélarié, Laparrouquial, Ledas-et-Penthiès, Le Masnau-Massuguiès, Massals, Miolles, Mirandol-Bourgnounac, Montauriol, Montirat, Montredon-Labessonnié, Mont-Roc, Moularès, Moulin-Mage, Murat-sur-Vèbre, Nages, Padiès, Pampelonne, Paulinet, Rayssac, Roquecourbe, Saint-André, Saint-Christophe, Saint-Cirgue, Saint-Jean-de-Vals, Saint-Michel-Labadié, Saint-Pierre-de-Trivisy, Saint-Salvi-de-Carcavès, Saussenac, Senaux, Tanus, Teillet, Terre-de-Bancalié (in part), Tréban, Trébas, Vabre, Valderiès, Valence-d’Albigeois, Viane and Villefranche-d’Albigeois.

5. **Link with the geographical area**

The link between 'Pérail' and its geographical area is based on its reputation and specific quality.

The geographical area is a semi-mountainous area of plateaus widely cut through by valleys and deep gorges in the south-west of the Massif Central, which extends over the natural regions of the Grands Causses, the Monts de Lacaune, the Monts du Lévézou, the Ségalas and the Rougiers.

The terrain, which causes cooler temperatures due to altitude, is a distinguishing factor compared to the immediate environment of the area, which has natural geographical boundaries marked by significant differences in altitude. The area has a semi-mountainous climate with Mediterranean and Atlantic influences, with irregular and sudden alternations between heatwaves and cold periods, rainfall and severe drought accentuated by strong winds. Poor, stony and shallow soils, sometimes including rocky outcrops of Jurassic limestone and primary acidic rocks, amplify this harshness.

Thanks to the interplay of mountainous and Mediterranean climates, there is a rich, aromatic and diverse flora, as found on the Lévezou moors, scrubland rich in Mediterranean species on the Rougiers [areas with red soil] and dry grasslands on the limestone terrain. The type of vegetation encountered combines pasture and rangeland plants, fodder crops and cereals intended for animals.

As a result of the harsh mountainous climate, the mostly unproductive soils and the rugged terrain of the geographical area, agricultural activities have focused on rearing predominantly Lacaune dairy sheep, which are the result of crossbreeding ancient local breeds from the mountains of the same name. This hardy breed can withstand the area's harsh conditions and has established itself there, alongside the expansion of arable grasslands, including legumes.

The sheep are fed mostly using the resources of the area: rangeland, temporary and permanent grassland, fodder and complementary feed. Feeding is mostly based on grazing, with the sheep having access to pastures in the direct vicinity of the sheepfold, and in those areas where the soils are poorest, grazing of rangelands, which provide diverse vegetation and many flowers.

Milk from Lacaune sheep is characterised by a high average fat content, which increases as lactation progresses, a high content of short-chain fatty acids and a high cheese yield.

'Pérail' was originally a farm-based, subsistence and seasonal product. Historically, as the milk was delivered in its entirety to the 'Roquefort' cheese dairies, farmers made 'Pérail' only towards the end of the ewes' lactation, when the cheese dairies stopped producing 'Roquefort' and gave the farmers the remaining rennet. To save money, producers gradually reduced the quantities of rennet during production. This resulted in a longer curdling time and required the addition of starter cultures to acidify the milk, ensuring better preservation from a health perspective. 'Pérail' production subsequently took on an artisanal and industrial dimension, although it continued to be produced on farms. The current mixed technology for making 'Pérail' therefore results from these successive stages.

The cheesemakers' know-how is illustrated by:

— Traditional production using whole milk, without skimming,

— Mixed technology with the addition of whey starters and rennet,

— Gravity draining in moulds, by turning and without pressing,

— Ripening using *Geotrichum*, the predominant flora in the cheese dairy environment, which develops on the surface, forming a light bloom.

'Pérail' is a small, thin cheese made with whole sheep's milk, which has a large surface area relative to its weight.

It is characterised by:

— A thin ivory-ecru coloured skin,

— An aroma of sheep's wool,

— An interior with a melting and creamy texture,

— Fresh and mild aromatic notes.

Lacaune sheep are particularly suited to the harshness of the environment and fed mainly with resources from the geographical area, producing milk that is rich in fat and is used whole. The milk's short-chain fatty acid composition directly influences the creamy, melting texture of 'Pérail' through low melting point temperatures. It also gives 'Pérail' its specific smell of sheep's wool.

'Pérail' was originally produced by a mainly female workforce, using the small quantity of milk available and carrying out draining in the limited space of the 'peralhièira' (the stone sink from which 'Pérail' took its name), which resulted in a small cheese.

During production involving whey starters and rennet, the cheesemakers use their know-how to adapt to the annual variability in the composition of sheep's milk in order to obtain a cheese with the desired organoleptic characteristics.

The thinness of 'Pérail' results in a very high draining capacity. Skilful execution of this stage of production, which is carried out by gravity in moulds, with turning and without pressing, helps to establish *Geotrichum*, the main ripening flora.

During ripening, 'Pérail' acquires its thin, ivory-ecru coloured skin as a result of the development of *Geotrichum*, which generates powerful proteolysis that produces a melting interior and a creamy texture. This flora prevents the accumulation of bitter peptides, formed by rennet proteases and lactic acid bacteria. The ripening process, which requires constant adaptation to the annual variability in the characteristics of sheep's milk, allows 'Pérail' to develop fresh, mild aromatic notes and to acquire its texture.

Locally, the reputation of 'Pérail' has historically been linked to its association with a round, flat, melting sheep's cheese, reserved for private consumption or traded in small quantities on local markets.

The name 'Pérail' first appeared in Occitan as *Péral* from the late 19th century. It was then Gallicised to 'Pérail', the name under which it was cited in 1973 in the *Larousse des Fromages*.

Nowadays, 'Pérail' has a national reputation linked to the development of milk production within the geographical area. It is associated with a flavour that is both milky and typical of sheep's cheese, and with the creaminess of its texture. Many consumers have become more aware of 'Pérail'. The following publications have contributed to this by focusing on the product:

— The cheesemakers Meilleur Ouvrier de France, who all put it on their stalls;

— The awards at the Concours Général Agricole de Paris since 2006;

— Specialised books, most recently: *L'encyclopédie passionnée de la gastronomie en Occitanie* [The passionate encyclopaedia of gastronomy in Occitania]: *Les Fromages* [Cheeses], A. Leoty, 2017; *L'atlas pratique des fromages* [The practical cheese atlas], T. Sicard, 2018; *Fromage* [Cheese], B. Antony, K. Khorodorowsky, 2019;

— Mentions in national media: France 3, *Elle à Table*, *Paris Match*, *Nouvel Obs*, France Info;

— New recipes published on many cooking websites and blogs each year (750g.com, gourmandisesansfrontieres.fr, grelinettecassolettes.com, xavier.fr, etc.).

Its reputation has spread to other continents: In the USA, E. Behr mentions it in his book *50 Foods: A Guide to Deliciousness* as early as 2013, and R. Honma of Japan, in *30 ans d'échange avec la France* [30 years of exchange with France] in 2016. It is sometimes requested in tastings at French embassies.

Reference to publication of the product specification

https://extranet.inao.gouv.fr/fichier/CDC-Perail-240528.pdf