C/2026/2773

13.5.2026

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/2026/2773)

COMMUNICATION OF APPROVAL OF A STANDARD AMENDMENT

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

'Comté'

EU reference number: PDO-FR-0116-AM01 – 16.2.2026

1. **Name of product**

'Comté'

2. Geographical indication type

☑ PDO

☐ PGI

☐ GI

3. **Sector**

☑ Agricultural products

☐ Wines

☐ Spirit drinks

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

France

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

Organisation

Ministry of Agriculture, Agri-food and Food Sovereignty

6. **Qualification as standard amendment**

The application for an amendment to the 'Comté' PDO does not involve any of the three situations constituting a Union amendment; specifically it does not:

(a) involve a change in the name of the protected designation of origin;

(b) risk voiding the link to the geographical area;

(c) entail further restrictions on the marketing of the product.

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

[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).

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

Title

Responsible department in the Member State:

Description

The contact details of the National Institute of Origin and Quality have been updated.

☐ The amendment affects the single document.

Title

Applicant group:

Description

The contact details of the applicant group have been updated.

☐ The amendment affects the single document.

Title

Type of product

Description

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

☑ The amendment affects the single document.

Title

Description of the product

Description

An insertion has been made to replace the requirement whereby the cheese had to have openings with a statement saying it 'may have' openings, in order to better reflect the reality of the product on the market today.

A list of the only authorised ingredients (milk, starters, rennet and salt) has also been inserted, as this constitutes a hallmark of the product's identity.

Some provisions previously under the 'Method of production' heading have been moved to this heading, as this is a more appropriate section for them: i.e. the need for a smeared rind and the minimum maturity index. Given that the methodology for assessing this index has changed, the target values have been updated, but without any substantive change: the minimum maturity index (MI) must be greater than or equal to 850 micromoles of glycine per gram of non-fat dry matter, calculated using either the TNBS acid method (2,4,6-trinitrobenzene sulfonic acid) or the infrared instrumental method.

The colour of the rind has been changed from 'golden yellow' to 'ochre yellow', which is more in line with the product's actual appearance.

Lastly, it has been specified that all portioning styles are permitted as well as those authorised to date, as long as the cheese is kept in its raw state and at a positive temperature.

☑ The amendment affects the single document.

Title

Definition of the geographical area

Description

The date of approval of the geographical area has been added, along with the list of municipalities in the geographical area updated in accordance with the 2024 Official Geographic Code (no change to the geographical area). Lastly, it has been clarified that maps of the geographical area can be found on the website of the National Institute of Origin and Quality.

☑ The amendment affects the single document.

Title

Evidence that the product originates in the geographical area

Description

An insertion has been made detailing the information to be included in the various mandatory reports.

The reporting requirements for milk producers have been updated:

— in particular, the requirement to report the use of fermented feed has been deleted because the presence of such feed anywhere on the holding is banned;

— a requirement to report the volume of milk delivered has been added, as well as a requirement to report the practice of green feeding.

A reporting requirement on the interruption of activity has been added for cheesemaking, ripening or pre-packaging plants.

Reporting requirements have been added for cheesemaking plants, in relation to:

— milk collected in the event of breakdowns or accidents;

— the volume of milk collected, the quantity of cheese produced (weight and number of wheels);

— weighing logs for white (unripened) cheese.

A reporting requirement has been added for ripening plants in respect of the quantity of cheese produced (weight and number of wheels) and for pre-packaging plants in respect of the weight of cheese packaged.

The traceability and record-keeping requirements for milk producers, and for cheesemaking, ripening, and pre-packaging plants, have also been brought into alignment with the provisions added to the section on the method of production.

Information has also been added on how the cheese is to be identified, as well as on the placement of the casein plate at the cheesemaking stage. It has been specified that the cheese is also identified by an outer printed band at the stage of placing the wheels on the market. For the pre-packaging stage, it is identified by the specific logo for the designation (see the 'Labelling' section of the product specification for these details).

☐ The amendment affects the single document.

Title

Description of the method of production;

Description

Milk production

The holding

An insertion has been made requiring milk producers to comply with the specification every day of the year, in order to ensure that the dairy herd feed is managed consistently and continuously even in the event of interruptions to deliveries.

Provisions have been added requiring new milk producers to undergo induction training before joining the supply chain. A requirement has also been added for certified cheesemaking plants to organise an annual meeting for these milk producers. At least one operator per holding is also now required to take part in an annual information meeting organised by the cheesemaking plant or by the group.

These provisions are intended, on the one hand, to inform new milk producers on the requirements set out in the product specification and on best practices, and on the other, to ensure that expertise is retained and that all parties in the supply chain are involved in the collective effort.

An insertion has been made whereby the total delivery for the holding may not exceed 1,2 million litres of milk per year, to ensure alignment with grazing and animal monitoring practices and preserve the link between the milk production level and the characteristics of the natural environment. A grace period until the 2031/2032 marketing year for compliance has been envisaged for operators needing to avail of it. In pursuit of these same goals, the number of dairy cows has been limited to 50 per annual work unit (AWU) and it has been specified that AWU quantities must be counted by the type of labour involved (counting a maximum of 1,2 salaried AWUs) and the percentage of full-time equivalents.

The terms 'dairy cow' and 'dairy year' have been defined, within the meaning of the specification, to clarify these concepts in the context of checks.

Breeds and husbandry practices

An insertion has been made whereby dairy cows entering the holding and replacement heifers born on or entering the holding must meet the relevant breed code requirement and bovine pedigree certification is mandatory, in order to ensure full compliance with the requirement that only the French Montbéliarde and Simmental breeds (and crosses thereof) be used, as they have adapted to the conditions in the area and 'Comté' has traditionally been made from [their milk].

An insertion has been made whereby from the 2031/2032 marketing year onwards, for each holding and for every 100 000 litres of milk per year, at least one heifer per age class must be born and reared [locally]. The intention is to ensure good animal health (which contributes towards the quality of the milk used) and welfare, by limiting transport times and ensuring stable living conditions, while also preserving expertise.

An insertion has been made whereby any dairy cow or any in-calf heifer added to the herd less than one month before her due date must have been fed without fermented feed or GMOS in the month prior to their arrival. The intention is to ensure that their diet meets these requirements set out in the product specification before milk production begins.

An insertion has been made whereby dairy cows may not be boarded out, in order to ensure that the dairy cows are managed and fed in compliance with the product specification all year round. It has been added that if heifers are boarded out, their diet on the host farm must not include fermented feed or GMOs. This is to ensure that their diet meets these two requirements of the product specification for a certain period of time before milk production begins.

It has also been added that the average annual production of the herd is capped at 8 500 litres of milk delivered per dairy cow per year. The intention is to restrict the yield per animal as this limits reliance on feed sourced outside the geographical area, thereby ensuring the link to the geographical area and hence the quality of the product. It also seeks to ensure animal welfare, which is a key expectation from consumers, given that hyperproductivity is detrimental to animal health. The cap is much higher than the average recorded on holdings in the 'Comté' PDO supply chain, as the intention is to prevent deviations [from the usual practices].

Management of grasslands and other forage areas

The grazing area actually used has been increased from 1 to 1,3 hectares per dairy cow, in order to guarantee sufficient resources in terms of quantity and quality (through more extensive farming) and boost resilience to climate risks. It has also been specified that the maximum stocking density on a given holding (the value of which remains unchanged) is calculated based on the total bovine livestock units on the holding.

An insertion has been made whereby a holding must have at least 50 ares of actual or potential forage area per dairy cow within a 1,5 km radius of the milking clusters, in order to guarantee easy access to pasture for the dairy cows and to limit reliance on mechanisation and fossil fuels.

The calculation methods for the individual milk productivity reference per holding surface area have been added to take account of various circumstances not previously specified (new farms, takeover or loss of land area, administrative readjustment).

A definition of permanent grassland has been added (natural grassland or land that has not been ploughed for more than five years) and it has been specified that it must account for at least 50 % of the forage area of the holding, in order to ensure the preservation of a majority of long-term grassland for the purposes of feeding the herd.

It has been added that no-till overseeding of grassland older than five years that has endured damage will not have its status as permanent grassland compromised, as this allows the existing flora to be boosted without any negative impact.

A definition of multi-species temporary grassland has been added, i.e. land where meadow species (at least five complementary perennial meadow species, including three grasses and two legumes) have been sown for less than five years. It replaces the previous definition (three types of species) and makes it possible to distinguish it from other grasslands and forage crops. The terrain and climate of the geographical area for Comté are such that it mostly consists of grasslands, the floral diversity of which contributes towards the link between the product and its geographical environment. The maximum percentage of other grasslands (fewer than five species) or relatively productive forage crops has been raised from 15 % to 20 % in order to boost the autonomy of holdings, including in the event of climate risks.

An insertion has been made whereby the plants used in catch crops must be species suitable for grazing. The purpose of such catch crops is to ensure soil cover during the summer period, after a cereal crop is harvested and until a meadow or the next cereal crop are sown. Soil cover limits erosion, ensures nutrient absorption, and serves as green manure. Ensuring that catch crops are suitable for grazing means that they can be used as feed in the event of climate risks, thus improving the resilience of the holding.

As far as banned crops are concerned, the acronym ‘GMO’ has replaced the term ‘transgenic’.

Fertilisation of forage or potential forage areas and environmental conservation

An insertion has been made whereby each holding must have an up-to-date spreading plan, so that each farmer has detailed information on the vulnerability of their parcels.

The list of livestock manures authorised for spreading on forage or potential forage areas has been clarified by restricting it to manures produced on approved holdings, or on other holdings in the geographical area on the condition that they are composted (slurry being the exception). An insertion has been made whereby manure from animals fed with fermented feed is banned in spreading operations, for the purpose of ensuring consistency with the production conditions on animal feed set out in the product specifications. For the same reason, it has been added that only livestock manure from animals fed without GMOs may be used in spreading operations from 1 January 2031 onwards. This date gives the affected producers time to adapt their feeding systems to this new constraint.

An insertion has been made whereby digestates from methanisation units are authorised for spreading, provided that they are located on holdings certified for milk production for the PDO or that they are collectively owned by such farms, or that they are located on GMO-free pig farms located within the geographical area that repurpose whey from the cheesemaking plants of the PDO.

The inputs used in the digestors must be sourced in the geographical area and must consist exclusively of:

— manure from animals fed without fermented feed, comprising at least 60 % of inputs by tonnage (GMO-free as of 1 January 2031);

— dairy water, whey, milk, fats and purification-plant sludge meeting the above conditions;

— catering waste, provided that it is systematically hygienised beforehand; otherwise, only plant-based waste is allowed;

— unfermented plants: green waste, crop waste, soiled forage, intermediate crops for energy purposes.

All these provisions on digestates from methanisers make it possible to ensure that material flows are consistent within the holding and the PDO production chain and that such digestates will not constitute a source of pollution on the parcels.

An insertion has been made whereby from 1 January 2031, the only authorised purification-plant sludge is sludge from plants that exclusively treat effluents and raw materials from PDO processing facilities. Among other things, the intention is to avoid contamination by human pathogens and chemical pollutants, while closing the material loop in accordance with the principle of circular economy.

It has been added that the other authorised fertilisers, in addition to green waste produced on the holding, are commercial fertilisers, calcium and magnesium amendments, and wood boiler ash from the geographical area, on the condition that the agronomic value and heavy metal levels are logged and monitored once a year. The purpose of this addition is to formalise the existing practice.

The synthetic nitrogen fertilisation for grasslands has been lowered from 50 to 40 units per hectare per year, and the total nitrogen fertilisation has been lowered from 120 to 100 units per hectare per year for each parcel – except for parcels receiving only solid effluents (compost or manure), which may receive up to 120 units of nitrogen per hectare per year. This provision aims to limit the risk of nitrogen leaching or volatilisation and the pollution of bodies of water in the karst areas of the Jura massif, which are particularly fragile.

It has been specified that if effluents are processed using a phase separator, the liquid phase is treated as a liquid effluent and the solid phase as manure or compost.

It has been added that the maximum number of applications applies to organic manure, to avoid any ambiguity when checks are being conducted.

Lastly, each effluent must be analysed every three years, based on agronomic values, to ensure consistent application rates.

An insertion has been made whereby fertilisers rich in readily available nitrogen (synthetic fertilisers, liquid effluents, poultry dropping composts) may not be spread until the sum of positive temperatures since 1 January has reached 200 °C for the sector concerned, as the date on which this cumulative temperature is reached is recognised in agronomy as the date on which the growing season begins. Prior to that date, fertilisers are not absorbed by vegetation and they remain soluble, leading to a high risk of environmental pollution.

It has been added that no slurry may be spread on snow and that slurry must not be spread on frozen soil, in order to avoid pollution that could damage the karst ecosystem in the geographical area.

The time between spreading manure and farming a forage area has been expressed in days (30 days instead of one month in the case of organic manure, 21 days instead of 3 weeks for synthetic mineral manure), in order to make the rule easier to understand when conducting checks. It has also been added that a 30-day period must be respected after poultry has passed through a parcel. The goal is to avoid contamination.

As regards the provision whereby all treatments are prohibited in the month preceding the harvest, it has been specified that this ban applies to potential forage areas as well as actual forage areas.

It has been added that the chemical destruction of grassland by a non-selective herbicide is prohibited in order to protect the environment and health, but localised treatments with selective herbicides are authorised to combat weeds.

Feed for the dairy herd

To clarify the terms used, 'basic intake' has been defined as meaning all types of forage and 'total intake' as the basic intake plus all supplementary feed. It has been added that the percentages refer to the dry matter.

The percentage of forage sourced from the geographical area has been raised from 70 % to 80 %, and it has been added that 70 % of such forage must come from the holding. The requirement that 80 % of forage be sourced from the geographical area formalises the practices employed by producers and the requirement that 70 % of forage be sourced on the holding helps to ensure the continuity of multi-purpose farms whose producers have traditional expertise linked to livestock farming and forage production.

The percentage of forage from the area in the dairy cows' diet has been lowered from 100 % to 95 %, in anticipation of possible climate risks.

It has been added that during the grazing season, the dry cows are left out to pasture for at least 15 days in order to ensure a continuous diet of grass feed.

It has been added that if a third-party drying service is provided, each holding takes back its own forage, which must not exceed 15 % of the forage from the holding, in order to preserve expertise in forage production on the holding.

As regards green feeding, it has been added that this practice is not authorised before 1 June, and that it must not be carried out on more than 75 days per year. The group considers that the practice of green feeding, if taken to extremes, could have the effect of limiting grazing. In addition, the distribution of mown grass and green maize on the same day is not permitted. Green maize must be produced entirely on the holding in order to ensure that green maize cultivation — historically rare in the geographical area — remains a limited practice.

As regards fodder beet, it has been added that it must be sourced in the geographical area and only be distributed during the winter period, up to a maximum of 3 kg of dry matter per cow per day over the period concerned. While the group acknowledges that fodder beets, like green maize, are commonplace, non-specific and minority crops used in practice, it considers that they should not take the place of dry forage.

On the subject of banned forage, it has been specified that the bans apply to all of the animals on the holding. The list of plants with a detrimental effect on taste has been extended to include new commercial proposals; radishes (grouped together with other plants from the *Brassica* family), endives, red and sugar beets, and potatoes have been added.

The list of supplementary feeds that are banned has been extended to include new commercial proposals: pure sugars, active or inactive yeasts, monopropylene glycol and molasses have been added. The group wishes to avoid the inclusion of artificial feed in the animals' diet as this would go against traditional practices and be detrimental to the quality of the milk. It has also been specified that these prohibitions apply all year round to all bovine animals on the holding.

The list of raw materials and other ingredients has also been updated, with preference being given to premium raw materials in order to preserve the quality of the milk: The following have been added: barley (from starch production, brewing or distillery), maize (from brewing or distillery), spelt (from brewing or distillery), sorghum, millet, buckwheat husks, walnuts, camelina, hemp and pumpkin seeds, dehydrated grass from local grasslands, dehydrated whole-plant legumes, and clays. Non-protein nitrogen source minerals are not allowed. Low quality raw materials have been removed (palm, copra, and safflower oils). The list of authorised ingredients for milk replacers has also been updated. It has been added that these supplementary feeds are to be stored in a clean, dry and ventilated place.

It has been specified that only plants and supplementary feed derived from products not subject to the labelling requirement laid down in the rules on GMOs (genetically modified organisms) are authorised in animal feed, instead of 'transgenic', as worded in the existing version of the product specification. GMO raw materials and ingredients, whether derived from or produced from GMOs, are also prohibited.

Milking, milk quality and animal welfare

It has been added that the holding must have equipment and a milking area dedicated exclusively to its own herd, so that the origin of the milk can be guaranteed.

The provision on robotic milkers has been amended in the interests of clarity: the presence (not the use) of robotic milkers on the holding is prohibited.

The provision whereby self-service milking was prohibited has been deleted as it is no longer necessary. The ban on distributing forage during milking has also been deleted, as forage is now considered a possibly useful source of seeding with flora.

The requirement whereby teats had to be cleaned before milking has been deleted and replaced by an obligation of result: the teat cups must be clean and dry. It has also been added that teats must be cleaned and the teat cups attached by hand. The purpose of these provisions is to preserve the bacterial flora in the milk; an attentive human presence at this very critical stage is also important for animal health and welfare reasons.

The provision on milking equipment has been reworded to specify that it applies not only to milk storage but also to the transportation stage.

The frequency with which the milking liners are to be changed has been amended to take account of different materials with varying lifespans. It has been specified that the check that the milking equipment is working properly concerns not only the fixed but also mobile equipment, that it should be every year (rather than every two years) and that the recommended repairs be carried out within the following month, in order to guarantee that the system works properly.

The provision on disinfectant products being authorised where necessary in the existing product specification has been supplemented with an explanation on how such circumstances are to be defined.

An insertion has been made whereby dairy cows housed in stanchion stalls must be released at least twice a week when conditions permit, in order to ensure animal welfare.

Preconditions for processing milk into Comté

The following requirements have been added for the holdings: the dairy cows must have not consumed fermented feed or GMOs; milking must have been carried out without disinfectant for at least one year; one member of the holding at least must be able to prove at least one month of experience in milking, and the rules on fertilisation set out in the product specification must have been followed for at least one year, in order to take into account the situation of non-dairy farmers commencing milk production.

Milk collection

It has been added that the tanks, pumps and pipes must be made of stainless steel and it has been specified that they may be used to transport drinking water as well as milk and whey.

The materials are to be inspected every year, with an obligation to carry out any repairs within the following month. All of these provisions are intended to guarantee the quality of the milk at the collection stage.

The conditions that apply to the milksheds for the cheesemaking plants have been specified in case contingencies arise which prevent cheesemaking in the usual facilities.

Lastly, it has been added that when milk that is incompatible with Comté production is collected, the compartments must allow for it to be transferred and for samples to be taken while ensuring that the milk is kept strictly separate.

Milk processing

A definition has been added for ‘cheesemaking plant’ and it has been specified that it must be separate from any other facility from the point where milk is received through to the moulding stage, to ensure separation from other products until the stage where the cheese can be marked. An exception has been added to the rule whereby only milk that is suitable for Comté production is allowed entry into the cheesemaking plant, as milk kept at a different temperature range can be brought in on days when there is no Comté production.

It has been added that an identified cheesemaker is required to be present during the production process from when the milk arrives at the vat through to the moulding stage. This person is to make decisions to guarantee that the traditional production method is followed, while taking account of the variable composition of the milk. It has also been added that the consistency of the curd is to be assessed by hand and that this is what determines the speed and duration of the stage in which the curds are cut and the moment when they are to be separated from the whey and moved to the moulds. New cheesemakers are also required to undergo training on the supply chain in the year before or after taking up their duties. This is to ensure that expertise is retained and that all parties in the supply chain are involved in the collective effort.

It has been added that the productive potential of the cheesemaking plant is defined on the basis of the productive potential of the holdings that deliver milk to it, which has been defined previously on the basis of the surface area available to the holdings. It has been added that the percentage growth of the productive potential of the cheesemaking plants is inversely proportionate to their size. Special rules have been added for when cheesemaking plants start working with [new] farms or farms that are newly certified for PDO production (no limit applies) and also for the event of mergers of cheesemaking plants. The goal of these measures is to preserve a tightly knit network of cheesemaking plants, thus guaranteeing the quality and diversity of flavours in the product.

It has been added that the equipment in the cheesemaking plant is to include a pre-ripening cellar and a system for measuring temperature, humidity and pressure. To clarify the requirements to be met by the cheesemaking plants, it has also been specified that the use of drinking water is mandatory for cleaning and rinsing all equipment. The ban on the use of closed vats in cheesemaking has been replaced by a requirement to use open vats. For the same reasons, it has been specified that the only things that may be added to the milk are the starter and the rennet.

In order to specify how they are to be used, the term 'milk medium' as a culture medium for starters is clarified to authorise raw or thermised whey, ‘recuite’ (re-heated whey), and milk. It is also added that the total volume of the various starters must not exceed 0,5 % of the volume of milk used for production. Lastly, it has been added that the starters, the culture media and the rennet must all be free from GMOs or GMO by-products, must not be derived from GMOs, and must not contain nanomaterials.

An insertion has been made whereby milk filtration is mandatory before vatting in order to ensure the retention of any element larger than 250 µm. It is added that the ripening time is defined as the period between the start of filling the vat and renneting, with a minimum duration of 40 minutes, and that the minimum stirring time is 15 minutes, in order to encourage contact between the raw material and the copper vat. The heating temperature is set at a maximum of 57 °C in order to preserve the flora of the raw milk.

It has been added that casein plates are to be affixed to the heel of each wheel during the moulding stage. It has been specified that in the event of salting with grains, the initial salting must be manual. For immersion salting, requirements have been added for the temperature, density and rate of renewal of the brine. The maximum time limit for surface microbial flora to become established on the second side of the cheese has been increased from 36 to 60 hours. This limit for the first side remains unchanged at 36 hours. This is an editorial amendment on the two salting methods that are permitted.

It has been added that the maximum deadline for the cheese wheel to be placed on a spruce board is set as the 4th day after the date on which it is produced, and that the wheels must be transferred to a certified ripening facility by the 50th day at the latest, at which point the cheeses weigh between 35 kg and 45 kg.

Ripening

A definition has been added for the ripening chamber, specifying that it must include an area where the cheeses are received and weighed, three separate cellars to ensure that the three stages of ripening are carried out at the same time, and an area where the cheeses are prepared for sale.

It has been added that an identified grading supervisor must be present during the stage of sorting the cheeses. This person must also decide when the ripening stage is to end, in order to guarantee the traditional production method. New grading supervisors are also required to undergo training on the supply chain within one year of taking up their duties. This is to ensure that expertise is retained and that that all parties in the supply chain are involved in the collective effort.

It has been added that the chamber must be equipped with a system for regulating temperature and humidity, as well as a thermometer. To clarify the requirements to be met by the chambers, it has also been specified that the use of drinking water is mandatory for cleaning the boards. It has also been added that the rubbing solution is to be kept at a maximum temperature of 13 °C, and that the flora used to make it must be GMO-free. This also applies to the culture media, which must also be free of nanomaterials.

An exception has also been added on only 'Comté' cheeses being allowed into the chamber, specifying that cooked pressed cheeses bearing quality marks are permitted. It has been added that the cheese lots must go through three consecutive stages: pre-ripening (which begins in the cheesemaking plant) until at least the 21st day after production, fermentation and ripening, with temperature conditions being defined for each of these stages. It has been specified that the minimum overall and taste values apply primarily to cheeses in wheel format or which have been portioned. There is a second scale, for which the minimum values have been added, to be used for grated cheese, after the initial classification of the cheeses.

It has been added that a wheel label (or wrapper) is to be affixed to the cheese at the end of the ripening process so the product can be identified, but that this label, and the outer printed band, are optional when the wheels are sold between certified operators, or when they are intended for pre-packaging or additional processing.

Portioning and packaging

A definition of 'portioning and packaging plant' has been added, specifying that it is the location not only for the pre-packaging stage, but also for portioning for sale to operators that use the cheese without processing.

An insertion has been added whereby an identified production line supervisor must be in attendance during portioning and pre-packaging operations, so the quality of the cheese in these stages may be guaranteed. New production line supervisors are also required to undergo training on the supply chain within one year of taking up their duties. This is to ensure that expertise is retained that all parties in the supply chain are involved in the collective effort.

The maximum period after which the wheels can be portioned has been extended from 15 days to one month, as this ensures that the quality of the product can be guaranteed. Lastly, an insertion has been made setting out the conditions for treating offcuts, the obligation to keep grated Comté in inert gas, and the ban on any addition to pre-packaged portions, in order to guarantee quality.

In the single document, the sentence whereby portioning and grating outside the area were allowed has been deleted, as it is not necessary.

☑ The amendment affects the single document.

Title

Details bearing out the link with the geographical environment

Description

Although the wording of this section has been amended, there has been no change to the link with the geographical area.

The dry matter and salt content levels for the cheese have been added to the single document, as they help to explain some of its characteristics.

☑ The amendment affects the single document.

Title

References to the inspection bodies

Description

The contact details of the inspection services have been updated.

☐ The amendment affects the single document.

Title

The specific labelling details

Description

As regards the mandatory particulars, an insertion has been made to state that these apply to 'Comté' in all presentation formats. It has also been added that the designation and the European Union's 'PDO' symbol must appear in the same visual field on the labelling, for customer information purposes.

It must also state the storage temperature for the cheese, i.e. between 4 °C and 8 °C, as these are the temperatures followed by the operators placing the cheese on the market.

It has been specified that the outer printed bands must also display the European Union's PDO symbol and the group's logo. The wheels of cheese must also clearly display the name and address of the ripener (which must be located in the geographical area), and these bands must remain on the cheese until the consumer presentation stage.

It has been specified that pre-packaged portions must include, as well as the name and logo of the group on the front of the packaging, the name and address of the certified operator within the meaning of Article 37(5) of Regulation (EU) 2024/1143.

As regards the non-mandatory particulars, it has been added that it is not mandatory for the ripening period to be indicated. However, if this information is included, it must indicate the minimum number of months that the cheese has spent in a Comté-certified ripening cellar and state that the age of the cheese corresponds to the date on which it is placed on the market by the last operator in the supply chain.

☑ The amendment affects the single document.

Title

National requirements

Description

The main control points have been updated in the light of changes in production conditions.

☐ The amendment affects the single document.

SINGLE DOCUMENT

Designations of origin and geographical indications of agricultural products

'Comté'

EU reference number: PDO-FR-0116-AM01 – 16.2.2026

1. **Name(s)**

'Comté'

2. **Geographical indication type**

☑ PDO

☐ PGI

☐ GI

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*

0406 – Cheese and curd

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

'Comté' is made entirely of whole cow's milk used in raw condition. It is a cheese with pressed, cooked paste that is salted on the surface or in brine. At the time of marketing, which takes place after a minimum ripening period of 120 days, the cheese's paste has an ivory to yellow colour, sometimes with an 'opening' that may be as big as a small cherry.

The only ingredients authorised for the production of Comté are milk, starters, rennet and salt.

'Comté' contains a minimum of 45 g and a maximum of 54 g of fat per 100 g of cheese after total desiccation and the dry matter must not weigh less than 62 g per 100 g of cheese. The salt content is not less than 0,6 g of sodium chloride per 100 g of cheese. The water content of the defatted cheese does not exceed 54 %.

Proteolysis: Ripening is carried out in such a way as to achieve a smeared rind and a level of proteolysis measured by a minimum maturity index (MI) greater than or equal to 850 micromoles of glycine per gram of non-fat dry matter, calculated using either the TNBS acid method (2,4,6-trinitrobenzene sulfonic acid) or the infrared instrumental method.

'Comté' is presented in the form of a wheel that weighs 32 to 45 kg and has a diameter of 55 to 75 centimetres and a straight or slightly convex heel 8 to13 cm in height. It has a scrubbed, solid and grainy rind that is ochre yellow to brown in colour. The cheese must not be more than 1,4 times higher at the centre than at the outer rim.

'Comté' may also be presented in packaged portions or grated, or any other portioning style. It is always presented to the consumer in its raw state and at a positive temperature.

'Comté' has a complex taste. While the general sensory features of all the wheels are the same, with fruity, milky and roasted notes, no two wheels of 'Comté' are identical. Six main groups of aromas can be distinguished in 'Comté' (fruity, milky, roasted, plant-like, animal-like, spicy) and they include more than 90 nuances.

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)*

Given the restrictions that apply to the dairy cows' feed, about 65 % of their annual dry matter intake comes from the geographical area.

The relief and climate in the geographical area are such that it is not technically possible for all of their supplementary feed to be produced there. In order to better adapt to climate-related risks, 5 % of the forage consumed by the dairy cows may be sourced outside the area.

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

In order to guarantee a close link between the region and the product by using specific feed from the geographical area, supplementary feed is limited to 1 800 kg per dairy cow per year and at least 95 % of the forage fed to the dairy cows is sourced in the geographical area.

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

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

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

In the event of pre-packaging, portioning and/or grating must be carried out in the geographical area in accordance with the requirements laid down in the product specification.

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

Mandatory particulars

In addition to the mandatory particulars required by the rules on the labelling and presentation of foodstuffs, the labelling of 'Comté' in any presentation format must include in the same visual field:

— 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' symbol, and optionally the words 'Protected Designation of Origin'.

The following must be affixed to each wheel:

— A brown or green outer printed band bearing the 'Comté clochettes' (registered trademark) logo [small bells]. The European Union's PDO symbol must also appear on these bands.

— A wheel label clearly indicating the name and address of the ripener (which must be located in the geographical area).

Under no circumstances may the label or outer printed bands be removed either before or during the stage of presentation to the final consumer.

The labelling of each pre-packaged consumer portion must display the following:

— the 'Comté' designation and the 'Comté clochette' small bells logo in green on the front of the packaging;

— the name and address of the operator within the meaning of Article 37(5) of Regulation (EU) 2024/1143.

The product's storage temperature must be indicated on the labelling as follows: Store between 4 °C and 8 °C.

Non-mandatory particulars

It is not mandatory for the ripening period to be indicated. If this information is included, it must be indicated as the minimum number of months that the cheese has spent in a Comté-certified ripening cellar.

The age of the cheese therefore corresponds to the date on which it is placed on the market by the last operator in the supply chain. This information may not be worded differently or changed. The words 'ripened by' are reserved for certified ripeners located in the geographical area for 'Comté' PDO.

Prohibited information

The use of any term or other reference accompanying the designation is prohibited on the labelling and in advertising, invoices or commercial documents for the PDO, with the exception of specific trademarks.

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

The stages of milk production, cheesemaking and ripening, portioning and grating (only in the event of pre-packaging) must take place in the geographical area approved by the National Institute of Origin and Quality at the

meeting of the relevant national committee held on 11 December 1997. The perimeter of this area, on the date of approval of the product specification by the relevant national committee, comprises the territory of the following municipalities, based on the 2024 Official Geographic Code:

Department of Ain (155 municipalities)

The department in its entirety, with the exception of:

— the cantons of Attignat, Bourg-en-Bresse (in its entirety), Châtillon-sur-Chalaronne, Meximieux, Miribel, Replonges, Saint-Genis-Pouilly, Trévoux, Villars-les-Dombes, Vonnas: all municipalities;

— In the canton of Ambérieu-en-Bugey: the municipalities of Château-Gaillard, Saint-Denis-en-Bugey, Saint-Maurice-de-Rémens;

— In the canton of Ceyzériat: the municipalities of Certines, Chalamont, Châtenay, Châtillon-la-Palud, Crans, Dompierre-sur-Veyle, La Tranclière, Le Plantay, Lent, Montagnat, Saint-André-sur-Vieux-Jonc, Saint-Just, Saint-Nizier-le-Désert, Servas, Versailleux, Villette-sur-Ain;

— In the canton of Gex: the municipalities of Sauverny and Versonnex;

— In the canton of Lagnieu: the municipalities of Blyes, Charnoz-sur-Ain, Chazey-sur-Ain, Leyment, Loyettes, Sainte-Julie, Saint-Jean-de-Niost, Saint-Maurice-de-Gourdans, Saint-Vulbas, Villieu-Loyes-Mollon;

— In the canton of Plateau d'Hauteville: the municipality of Artémix;

— In the canton of Pont-d'Ain: the municipalities of Priay, Varambon;

— In the canton of Saint-Etienne-du-Bois: the municipalities of Beaupont, Cormoz, Marboz;

— In the canton of Thoiry: the municipalities of Challex, Chevry, Pougny, Ségny.

Department of Doubs (465 municipalities)

The department in its entirety, with the exception of:

— the cantons of Audincourt, Bethoncourt, Montbéliard: all municipalities;

— Canton of Baume-les-Dames: the municipalities of Abbenans, Avilley, Bonnal, Cubrial, Cubry, Cuse-et-Adrisans, Fontenelle-Montby, Gondenans-les-Moulins, Gondenans-Montby, Gouhelans, Huanne-Montmartin, Mésandans, Mondon, Montagney-Servigney, Montussaint, Nans, Puessans, Rognon, Romain, Rougemont, Tallans, Tournans, Tressandans, Trouvans, Uzelle, Viéthorey;

— In the canton of Bavans: the municipalities of Accolans, Aibre, Allondans, Appenans, Arcey, Bavans, Berche, Beutal, Blussangeaux, Blussans, Bournois, Bretigney, Colombier-Fontaine, Dampierre-sur-le-Doubs, Désandans, Dung, Échenans, Étouvans, Étrappe, Faimbe, Gémonval, Geney, Issans, La Prétière, Laire, Le Vernoy, L'Isle-sur-le-Doubs, Longevelle-sur-Doubs, Lougres, Mancenans, Marvelise, Médière, Montenois, Onans, Présentevillers, Rang, Raynans, Sainte-Marie, Saint-Julien-lès-Montbéliard, Saint-Maurice-Colombier, Semondans, Sourans, Soye, Villars-sous-Écot;

— In the canton of Maîche: the municipalities of Abbévillers, Bondeval, Meslières, Thulay;

— In the canton of Valentigney: the municipalities of Bourguignon, Ecot, Mathay, Mandeure, Valentigney, Voujeaucourt.

Department of Jura (483 municipalities)

The entire department, except for the municipalities of Annoire, Aumur, Champdivers, Chemin, Longwy-sur-le-Doubs, Molay, Peseux, Petit-Noir, Saint-Aubin, Saint-Loup, Tavaux.

Department of Saône-et-Loire (13 municipalities)

Municipalities included in their entirety:

Beaurepaire-en-Bresse, Beauvernois, Bellevesvre, Champagnat, Cuiseaux, Flacey-en-Bresse, Fretterans, Joudes, Mouthier-en-Bresse, Sagy, Saillenard, Savigny-en-Revermont, Torpes.

Department of Haute-Savoie (1 municipality)

Municipalities included on a partial basis:

Challonges (only parcels numbers 1538 (formerly 562) and 563 (partial) in section A (sheet 6)).

Maps of the geographical area can be found on the website of the National Institute of Origin and Quality.

6. **Link with the geographical area**

Summary of the link

The geographical area comprises the arc of the Jura mountains, a set of limestone plateaux, and its extension into a small part of the adjoining plain.

The agricultural areas in question are characterised by their poor soils and significant contours and by the calcareous and molassic nature of the geological substratum.

The climate of the geographical area tends towards both continental and northern with big temperature differences between the seasons and rainfall that, although it is even throughout the year, is heavy in the summer, with a low annual average temperature and a high number of days of frost.

It is a very wet mountain or sub-mountain environment. This rainfall is already considerable at low altitude and increases towards the interior of the mountain range. Seasonal distribution is generally characterised by the lack of a dry season.

This area is divided between woodland, half of which is composed of spruce, and grassland. The area's particular geo-climatic conditions (heavy rainfall, no summer drought, etc.) contribute very favourably to high-quality grass production. They allow the development of natural grassland that has a very rich flora (dicotyledons, in particular) and a specific, principally limestone, flora.

However, this information is subject to variation due to ongoing climate change, and droughts can no longer be ruled out as they can occur in any season.

In this area, which is well-suited to grazing, dairy cows feed in this manner for as long as the weather conditions, the soils' bearing capacity and the presence of grass allow. Breeders have selected the Montbéliarde breed, which is well adapted to the conditions in the area and makes up nearly all of the dairy herds in the geographical area. The extensive farming of grassland has been maintained (stocking density and the use of nitrogen and concentrates, etc. are limited). In addition, the geographical area has a particular 'cheesemaking tradition'. This tradition, based on the pooling of milk for the purpose of making a large cheese, has led to a strong sense of solidarity and common rules.

Since the 13th century farmers in this region have worked together to pool every day the milk produced by their various herds in order to make a large wheel. Still today the great majority of milk producers belong to cooperatives and pool their milk in a processing plant called 'fruitière', the local cheesemaking plant.

The traditional methods of making this cheese live on and are maintained, on the one hand, in the way the animals are bred using a specific system for the management of pastures and the drying of mowed grass and, on the other, in the way the cheese is made by carefully timing the cutting of the curd, its stirring and heating, the extraction and pressing and then the salting, pre-ripening and ripening.

'Comté' is a cheese made from raw cow's milk. It has a cooked pressed paste and is in the shape of a large wheel 55 to 75 cm in diameter. It is ripened for a long time and is therefore a long-keeping cheese. It must contain at least 62 grams of dry matter per 100 grams of cheese, and the water content of the defatted cheese must not exceed 54 %.

The salt content is not less than 0,6 g of sodium chloride per 100 g of cheese.

'Comté' has a complex taste. While the general sensorial features of all the wheels are the same, no two wheels of 'Comté' are identical. Six main groups of aromas can be distinguished (fruity, milky, roasted, plant-like, animal-like, spicy) and they include more than 90 nuances.

It is in this difficult environment, where the landscape is divided between woodland and grassland and where it was impossible to develop other resources, that large hard cheeses became the product of choice. For the people living on this land, a long-keeping cheese was the only preserved food that could be made from the abundant supply of summer milk and that would keep through the long winter. Local breeders therefore selected a cow breed that was particularly well suited to the local conditions and to the making of a particular cheese. The milk was pooled in the 'fruitières' for the purpose of producing a large, long-keeping cheese that would allow the breeders to make the best use of the richness of this land outside the geographical area. The choice of a cheese with a cooked paste was based on the abundance of firewood in the area.

The distinctive characteristics of the grassland are expressed in the cheese with the help of specific expertise applied at every production stage.

First of all, the great floral richness of the natural environment of the geographical area contributes strongly to the development of the cheese's aromatic components. This diversity is preserved through the extensive farming of the grassland by the breeders. The close link between floral diversity and the rich aroma of 'Comté' was also demonstrated by two scientific studies in 1994. By limiting the fat content during cheesemaking it is possible to avoid off-tastes due to lipolysis and reinforce the typical aromas of 'Comté'. By laying down a minimum dry matter content and a maximum water content for the defatted cheese, it is possible to avoid excess water in the cheese and help bring out all the aromas. The aromas are enhanced also by the minimum salt content of the cheese.

The obligation to use open vats allows the cheesemakers to maintain their skills, such as the correct timing of the cutting of the curd and of the extraction. Finally, the ripeners use their know-how to carefully adjust the ripening conditions of each lot. The cheese's aroma, which is the result of natural factors such as the grass and the microbe ecosystem, is fully developed only after a long period of ripening on spruce boards, which are particularly well suited to the ripening of 'Comté'. The production of 'Comté' allows the maintenance of traditional agricultural activities and contributes greatly to achieving a balanced local economy.

Electronic (URL) reference to publication of the product specification

https://info.agriculture.gouv.fr/boagri/document_administratif-a5dc2d3a-eff7-49bd-a9c7-387919793b41