C/2025/4234

1.8.2025

Publication of the communication of an approved standard amendment to a product specification of a geographical indication in accordance with Article 5(4) of Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2025/27 [1]

(C/2025/4234)

COMMUNICATION OF APPROVAL OF A STANDARD AMENDMENT

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

'Piment d'Espelette' / 'Piment d'Espelette – Ezpeletako Biperra'

EU PDO-FR-9131-AM01 – 2.5.2025

1. **Product name**

'Piment d'Espelette' / 'Piment d'Espelette – Ezpeletako Biperra'

2. **Geographical indication type**

☒ Protected designation of origin (PDO)

☐ Protected geographical indication (PGI)

☐ Geographical indication (GI)

3. **Sector**

☒ Agricultural products

☐ Wines

☐ Spirit drinks

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

France

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

Ministry of Agriculture and Food Sovereignty

6. **Qualification as standard amendment**

The application for amendment to the 'Piment d'Espelette' / 'Piment d'Espelette – Ezpeletako Biperra' 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)**

1. *Description of the product*

(1) The species, variety and varietal type are added by specifying the botanical description (plant and fruit) as follows: The chilli peppers come exclusively from the species *Capsicum annuum* L. of the following varietal type: an annual herbaceous plant up to 80 cm in height; alternate, whole and oval leaves; single white leaves at the leaf axil; plump, hanging, conical fruit, turning red when ripe; a partition divides the fruit (incompletely at the top) into three cells housing many seeds. The chilli peppers of that designation are obtained from seeds of the Gorria variety or from seeds of a local variety of the varietal type defined above.

(2) Amendment of the sensory description of whole fresh chilli peppers in strings: it is now specified that the aromas develop as the chilli peppers dry/ripen and thus concern only the powder. The organoleptic descriptors have therefore been removed from the characterisation of the fresh whole chilli peppers in strings.

(3) Deletion of the size of fresh whole chilli peppers used to make powder: the size of the chilli peppers used to make powder has been deleted, as this characteristic does not affect the organoleptic quality of the powder.

(4) Deletion of the number of chilli peppers per string: this provision already features in the part of the specification relating to the method of production.

The amendment affects the single document.

2. *Evidence that the product originates in the geographical area*

(1) The deadline for transmitting the identification declaration, which was originally to be before 1 February of the year preceding the first year of implementation, has been brought forward to 31 October to take account of the sowing stage in the geographical area and ensure that operators are authorised before the start of production.

(2) The uniformity of the products contained in a batch and the definition of the batch of powder have been specified as follows:

— production of fresh whole chilli peppers no older than two days;

— production of strings over the course of one week;

— ground powder limited to a maximum of 180 kg. Mixing powders or bags of powder from different grindings is prohibited.

(3) The dates of the season have been amended to reflect the crop cycle in view of the obligation to sow in the geographical area: the season will now run from 1 February to 31 January.

(4) A retention period for records is now indicated: operators must keep the data contained in the registers during the season to which they relate and for the following two seasons.

(5) The restoration of the marking systems is extended to operators who have had their authorisation suspended (and not only to operators who have had their authorisation withdrawn).

(6) Several provisions have been amended in connection with the changes made to the 'Method of production' section of the product specification and in order to improve traceability (improved monitoring of harvested quantities and better implementation of controls), namely:

— the introduction of two new steps entitled 'Sowing' and 'Transplanting';

— under the step entitled 'Planting', the origin of the plants has been added;

— under the step entitled 'Management', a provision has been added specifying that processing operations are triggered on the basis of an observation recorded in a register;

— under the step entitled 'Harvesting', the harvest declaration and the summary of harvested volumes have been amended;

— under the step entitled 'Manufacture of powders', details on how to identify the batches (date of burning, date of grinding and weight) have been added;

— under the step entitled 'Entry, removal and stocks of fresh whole chilli peppers and chilli peppers in strings or in powder form', the stock declaration date has been brought forward.

The amendment does not affect the single document.

3. *Demarcation of the geographical area*

The section of the specification relating to the description of the geographical area has been reworded to specify that all the steps in the production of 'Piment d'Espelette' PDO, from sowing to packaging, are carried out within the geographical area.

The arrangements for identifying parcels suitable for the production of 'Piment d'Espelette' PDO have also been specified.

The amendment affects the single document.

4. *Description of the method for obtaining the product*

(1) A new sub-chapter entitled 'Sowing' has been added to include seedling producers in the product specification and provide that seedlings must be produced in the geographical area: The production of the seedlings (sowing and raising) must be carried out by an operator in the area covered by the designation. Producers may use seeds from their own holdings. Sowing is done directly in containers, pots, trays, blocks or seedling trays. It is carried out in a designated sheltered workshop. The seeds must be covered. The plants are transplanted directly into containers, pots, trays, blocks or seedling trays. This step may be carried out as soon as the seedling has two cotyledons. The plants must be transplanted in a designated workshop.

(2) Planting and management:

The obligation to use plastic mulching has been abolished.

The spacing of the seedlings on the line, originally set at minimum 40 cm irrespective of the type of planting, is kept at minimum 40 cm for single seedlings but increased to 50 cm for double seedlings. This increase in the space allows for better root development for double seedlings and therefore improved reactivity to climate hazards.

The planting density, which originally ranged from a minimum of 10 000 plants/ha to a maximum of 30 000 plants/ha when planting single seedlings or 60 000 plants/ha when planting double seedlings, has been changed to 40 000 plants/ha when planting double seedlings, in order to ensure coherence with the change to the spacing on the line.

Health management

The following provisions have been added in order to reduce the use of plant protection products: ‘During the calendar year, herbicides may be used only with biocontrol products included on the list of biocontrol products published by the Directorate-General for Food. The systematic use of other phytosanitary treatments is prohibited. Treatment operations are to be triggered on the basis of an observation recorded in a register.’

Protection against frost: The original provision provides for protection against frost between 1 April and 31 May and at the end of the growing season, from 25 October. The date for possibly putting in place protection against frost has been brought forward to 15 October. The justification for this change is the earlier occurrence of frosts. The hours during which protective measures may be taken have now been specified (between 17.00 and 10.00).

Harvest

To adapt to climate change and limit the use of requests for temporary changes, the provision of harvest dates has been amended as follows: ‘The chilli peppers are harvested manually in stages, until the plant succumbs to frost or at the latest by 15 December.’

Following changes in practices, and to enable harvesting at the optimum time so as to limit the downgrading of the harvested fruit, the minimum volume of fresh chilli peppers needed to obtain 1 kg of powder will be lowered from 8 kg to 6,5 kg.

Concerning fresh chilli peppers: various amendments or clarifications have been made to this product, mainly aimed at harmonising vocabulary and clarifying certain terms, notably for control purposes (‘shelter from the sun’, ‘shelter from the rain’ and ‘packaged in food boxes’).

Concerning chilli peppers in strings: the provision on stringing now specifies that it is reserved for chilli peppers from the holding, in order to take account of operators’ practices. A tolerance threshold has been added regarding the number of chilli peppers per string (15 % more chilli peppers).

Concerning the powder: various amendments have been made to clarify certain provisions or to adapt them in the light of operators’ practices:

— The description of the place where the powders ripen has been amended: a ‘warm and well-aired place’ is replaced by ‘well-aired place (shelter or facade)’ to facilitate control.

— The ripening period has been extended by 25 days for chilli peppers harvested between 2 and 15 December.

— Regarding the products’ ripening conditions, a provision has been added specifying that the chilli peppers must be spread out in a single layer on a perforated sheet and that the space between two perforated sheets must be a minimum of 10 cm to improve said ripening conditions.

— The final processing date has been brought forward to 15 February (from 30 March) in order to ensure rapid processing of the fruit after ripening and thereby preserve its qualities.

— A maximum packaging time has been added: 'Immediately after grinding' has been replaced by 'Within 24 hours' to facilitate control.

— The procedures for identifying and marking the various products (date of burning and date of grinding, weight) have been specified in order to ensure the product's traceability (requirement to specify the batches of powder at all processing stages, packaging requirement in connection with sale between operators, tamper-proof marking system, airtight container).

The types of packaging authorised have been supplemented: in order to limit unnecessary repackaging (reduce waste), for sales between operators and before placing on the market, packaging at actual weight (which would not correspond to the four pre-defined weights for the presentation of the product) is permitted only for the batch end (up to a maximum of 5 kg) and for the bags sampled. The purpose of restricting packaging at actual weight is to facilitate the verification of stocks during inspections.

The amendment affects the single document.

5. *Evidence of the link with the environment*

The section of the product specification relating to the link between the product and its environment has been supplemented, in order to stress that the link to the origin of 'Piment d'Espelette' is based on its reputation and the quality of its ripe red fruit, whose powder has an intense fragrance.

A sentence introducing the link has been added: the link to the origin of 'Piment d'Espelette' is based on its reputation and the quality of its ripe red fruit, whose powder has an intense fragrance dominated by fruity and/or roasted aromas, sometimes supplemented by a hint of dried hay and combined with a strong, but not overly fiery, sensation on the palate.

The single document has also been amended to shorten Section 5 'Link with the geographical area'.

The amendment affects the single document.

6. *Specific labelling details*

In accordance with the other sections of the specification, the following provisions have been added:

— For fresh whole chilli peppers, each box must be identified by a tamper-proof marking system approved by the National Institute of Origin and Quality. This system can be used as a help with labelling.

— For chilli peppers intended for sale in strings, each string must be identified by a tamper-proof marking system approved by the National Institute of Origin and Quality indicating the number of chilli peppers. It can be used as a basis for labelling.

— For chilli peppers in powder form intended for sale, each powder container must include a tamper-proof marking system approved by the National Institute of Origin and Quality also indicating the harvest year. This system can be used as a help with labelling.

The amendment affects the single document.

7. *References to the inspection body*

The contact details and the references to legislation have been updated.

The amendment does not affect the single document.

8. *National requirements*

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

The amendment does not affect the single document.

SINGLE DOCUMENT

'Piment d'Espelette' / 'Piment d'Espelette – Ezpeletako Biperra'

EU No: EU PDO-FR-9131-AM01 – 2.5.2025

PDO (X) PGI ( )

1. **Name(s) (of the PDO or PGI)**

'Piment d'Espelette' / 'Piment d'Espelette – Ezpeletako Biperra'

2. **Member State or third country**

France

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

3.1. *Combined Nomenclature code*

— 07 – EDIBLE VEGETABLES AND CERTAIN ROOTS AND TUBERS

0709 – Other vegetables, fresh or chilled

0709 60 – Fruits of the genus *Capsicum* or of the genus *Pimenta*

0709 60 10 – Sweet peppers

— 09 – COFFEE, TEA, MATÉ AND SPICES

0904 – Pepper of the genus *Piper*; dried or crushed or ground fruit of the genus *Capsicum* or of the genus *Pimenta*

0904 21 – Dried, neither crushed nor ground

0904 21 10 – Sweet peppers (*Capsicum annum*)

— 09 – COFFEE, TEA, MATÉ AND SPICES

0904 – Pepper of the genus *Piper*; dried or crushed or ground fruit of the genus *Capsicum* or of the genus *Pimenta*

0904 22 – Crushed or ground

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

The chilli peppers come exclusively from the species *Capsicum annuum* L. of the following varietal type: an annual herbaceous plant up to 80 cm in height; alternate, whole and oval leaves; single white leaves at the leaf axil; plump, hanging, conical fruit, turning red when ripe; a partition divides the fruit (incompletely at the top) into three cells housing many seeds. The chilli peppers of that designation are obtained from seeds of the Gorria variety or from seeds of a local variety of the type defined above.

They are red when ripe and come in three forms:

— fresh, whole chilli peppers: totally free of any green colour, they are regular and conical in shape, and their skin is smooth;

— in strings: the chilli peppers are strung together in twos (in a fishbone shape), threes (in a triangle) or fours (in a cross); they are red in colour, they are regular and conical in shape, have a smooth skin and measure 7-14 cm in length, excluding the stalk. The string must be arranged harmoniously and evenly, both in overall terms and in terms of the shapes and size of the chilli peppers. This allows the chilli peppers to ripen and dry out;

— chilli powder: the chilli peppers for each batch of powder must come from the same holding. Grinding occurs after a period of ripening, followed by drying in an oven. The 'Piment d'Espelette' powder is orange to reddish-brown in colour. It must be sufficiently finely ground so that the particles do not exceed 5 mm. 'Piment d'Espelette' chilli powder has an intense odour dominated by fruity, smoky aromas, and/or a hint of hay, combined with a strong, but not overly fiery, more or less long-lasting taste, which hits the palate gradually and/or with a sensation of heat. 'Piment d'Espelette' chilli powder may have a hint of sweetness and/or bitterness in the mouth. The moisture content of the chilli powder is lower than 12 %.

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

Not applicable

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

All the steps in production of 'Piment d'Espelette' PDO, from sowing to packaging, must take place in the geographical area.

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

Packaging takes place in the production area. This requirement is intended to guarantee not only the product's authenticity, but also that it retains its qualities and characteristics and thus protects the 'Piment d'Espelette' designation of origin. Moreover, given the miscible nature of the chilli pepper's powder, the obligation to package the powder in the area of production guarantees its traceability and origin.

The chilli pepper is harvested when it is red (on at least 80 % of its surface).

Within 48 hours of harvesting, the chilli peppers are sorted and either dispatched fresh and whole or in strings or left to ripen for grinding into powder.

The fresh whole chilli peppers are stored before dispatch away from the sun and rain at the operator's premises. They are packaged in small, slatted boxes labelled and used exclusively for 'Piment d'Espelette'. The boxes have a maximum capacity of 15 kg, and their height may not exceed 25 cm.

Chilli peppers to be sold in strings of 20, 30, 40, 60, 80 or 100 peppers (with a tolerance of 15 % more peppers) are strung up manually on a food string by the producer or under the responsibility of the producer. Stringing is reserved for chilli peppers grown on the holding. This knowledge, shared by the producers of the PDO, results in a string of peppers matching the product's description.

After sorting, chilli peppers to be sold in powder form are ripened for at least 15 days in a well-aired place (shelter or facade). For chilli peppers harvested between 2 and 15 December, the ripening period is extended to a minimum of 25 days. For ripening in a sheltered place, the peppers must be spread out in a single layer on a perforated sheet. The distance between two perforated sheets must be at least 10 cm. At the end of the ripening period, the peppers have their stalks removed and are dried and ground. The last processing of the peppers into powder of the season must be carried out no later than 15 February following the harvest.

Within 24 hours of grinding, the powder must be stored in a vacuum container with a capacity of 250 g, 500 g, 1 kg or 5 kg. Packaging quickly after grinding preserves the powder from organoleptic deficiencies such as pronounced bitterness or aromas of damp hay, fungus, greenery or even staleness. For the batch end, only one vacuum container weighing less than 5 kg is permitted.

After grinding, the batches are marked with the date of burning and the date of grinding.

As soon as they have been vacuum packed, the batches are marked with the date of burning, the date of grinding and the weight.

No colourings, additives or preservatives may be added, except for inert gas.

All stored batches of powder subject to a request for organoleptic examination must be identified.

For sales between operators and release for consumption, the powder must be packaged either in hermetic containers with a tamper-proof marking system with a capacity of 250 g, 500 g, 1 kg or 5 kg or in hermetic glass jars with a tamper-proof marking system.

For sales between operators, hermetic containers must be labelled according to their actual weight.

Packaging takes place in the production area. This requirement is intended to guarantee not only the product's authenticity, but also that it retains its qualities and characteristics and thus protects the 'Piment d'Espelette' designation of origin. Moreover, given the miscible nature of the chilli pepper's powder, the obligation to package the powder in the area of production guarantees its traceability and origin. Packaging quickly after grinding preserves the powder from organoleptic deficiencies such as pronounced bitterness or aromas of damp hay, fungus, greenery or even staleness.

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

Labels on fresh chilli peppers or those in strings or in powder form must bear the words 'Piment d'Espelette' or 'Piment d'Espelette – Ezpeletako Biperra' in letters at least 1,3 times the size of the largest characters on the label. The label must contain the European Union PDO logo. The logo must be accompanied by the name of the designation, with no intervening words.

The label can also contain the terms 'appellation d'origine protégée' (protected designation of origin) or 'AOP' (PDO), immediately followed or preceded by the name of the designation, with no intervening words.

Apart from the label, accompanying documents, invoices and markings must bear the name of the designation of origin and the terms 'appellation d'origine protégée' (protected designation of origin) and/or 'AOP' (PDO) and/or the European Union PDO logo.

For fresh whole chilli peppers, each box must be identified by a tamper-proof marking system approved by the National Institute of Origin and Quality. This system can be used as a help with labelling.

For chilli peppers intended for sale in strings, each string must be identified by a tamper-proof marking system approved by the National Institute of Origin and Quality indicating the number of peppers. It can be used as a basis for labelling.

For chilli peppers in powder form intended for sale, each powder container must include a tamper-proof marking system approved by the National Institute of Origin and Quality indicating also the harvest year. This system can be used as a help with labelling.

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

The geographical area covers the territory of the following municipalities in the Pyrénées-Atlantiques department completely: Larressore and Souraïde. It covers the following municipalities in part: Ainhoa, Cambo-les-Bains, Espelette, Halsou, Itxassou, Jatxou, Saint-Pée-sur-Nivelle and Ustaritz. The boundaries of the geographical area are entered in the land register of the partly covered municipalities.

5. **Link with the geographical area**

5.1. *Specificity of the geographical area*

The small region of Espelette has a southern, oceanic climate. Summers are warm (with average highs of 25 °C in July) and winters mild (with an average of 12 °C in January). Frost is rare, and days without thaw even rarer.

The Espelette region is not affected by the sea breezes caused by the contrast between the temperature of the ocean and that of the land, as it is protected by a range of hills some 100 m high which acts as a windbreak and prevents the phenomena of evapotranspiration and plant dehydration from occurring.

Moreover, the Pyrenean hills and mountains surrounding Espelette delimit a north-west facing amphitheatre of sorts and form the first barrier against the humid ocean flows, which frequently erupt as heavy rain.

On average, 180 days of the year benefit from precipitation. That gives the region the highest water balance in France at that altitude. Finally, by causing an increase in cloud cover, the surrounding hills regulate the temperature and reduce the difference between daytime and night-time temperatures.

The parcels must be sufficiently fertile and rich in organic matter to meet the plant's needs, to provide a good water supply and good drainage, to benefit from favourable orientation and exposure to sunlight and to prevent the risk of erosion. The texture of these parcels is a balance between clay, silt and sand, benefiting almost each year from a healthy supply of well-decomposed manure.

Finally, the presence of the Pyrenees mountains, under the influence of the foehn between the northern and southern slopes, results in a southerly wind known as haïze hegoa. This warm wind is unusual in that it preserves the same intensity by day and by night; it is frequent in autumn and winter, contributing to the ripening and drying of the fruits.

The meteorological data demonstrate that the Espelette region displays unusual climatic characteristics owing to the conjunction of its geographical and geomorphologic position.

5.2. *Specificity of the product*

'Piment d'Espelette' chilli peppers have an intense odour dominated by fruity and/or smoky aromas, sometimes with an added hint of fresh-mown hay, combined with a strong, but not overly hot, taste. They are red when ripe and come in three forms: fresh whole chilli peppers, and chilli peppers in powder form or in strings.

The chilli pepper was first introduced to the Espelette region in the 16th century; it probably reached the province of Labourd through Spain via the Nive valley. The first reference to chilli peppers of the *Capsicum* species and their use as a spice appeared in the 17th century. These chilli peppers offered an alternative to black pepper – which, up to then, had been imported at a high cost – in the seasoning and preserving of meat.

The chilli peppers were also praised for their therapeutic virtues and found their way into medicine cabinets in people's homes. In 1745, Father Manuel de Larramendi's Basque dictionary described the use of 'Piment d'Espelette' as a spice.

They were grown in kitchen gardens by women, mainly for use in the home or for sale to pork butchers and innkeepers.

The sale of 'Piment d'Espelette' provided an extra income for the women who grew it and supplemented the low incomes of small, mixed crop and livestock farms.

The development of chilli pepper-growing thus helped maintain these traditional, mixed crop and livestock farms.

Garlands of chilli peppers drying on house-fronts in autumn are a typical, striking feature of the region.

'Piment d'Espelette' peppers are currently the only traditional chillies used as a spice that are produced in France. Given its tropical origin, the species *Capsicum annuum* L. is not suited to cultivation and processing as a spice in French climes, except under very special conditions and in the case of a varietal type that is adapted to them.

It should be noted that the *Capsicum annuum* species has been recognised by botanists since 1930 for its ability to take different forms according to the soil and climate.

The plant needs regular, generous watering as it does not flourish in too little or too much water. The plant can only develop when the soil temperature is above 12 °C and it grows well when the average temperature reaches 20 °C with only slight variations between day and night.

5.3. *Causal link*

Uniquely in these latitudes, the climate of the small region of Espelette combines just the right temperature and humidity conditions that the plant needs to grow and to be processed into spice. The characteristics of the temperatures, rainfall and heat regulation allow the plant's needs to be met.

The local varietal type originates from the age-old mass selection performed by producers. All these characteristics are in harmony with the conditions of the local environment and enable the chilli pepper to be processed into a highly distinctive spice: aromatic and hot without being fiery.

From the selection of the seed to the preservation of the spice with all its organoleptic characteristics, each stage is conducted in accordance with local and adapted expertise. Growing and processing 'Piment d'Espelette' requires great powers of observation and frequent use of manual processes. Over the centuries, producers have succeeded in preserving the varietal type and the traditional cultivation, drying and processing techniques that have enabled the product to retain its originality.

'Piment d'Espelette' plays a prominent role in local gastronomy and culture: in France, it is the spice of the Basque Country. For example, a number of local expressions are based on the word 'piment' [pepper], and the chilli pepper festival at Espelette is a highlight for the entire region: on that day, thousands of people descend on the village both to stock up on and to celebrate 'Piment d'Espelette'.

In the old days, 'Piment d'Espelette' enabled women producing it to become financially independent. Today, it accounts for a significant proportion of the income of the agricultural holdings, and the production of 'Piment d'Espelette' allows small, family-run holdings to be set up or to stay in business.

The businesses of many prepared and cured meat firms, producers of prepared meals and restaurateurs in the region are directly linked to 'Piment d'Espelette'.

Reference to publication of the specification

https://info.agriculture.gouv.fr/boagri/document_administratif-e7cbb1fb-1ffb-4ddc-b448-4c990d990f2a