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Publication of a communication of approval of a standard amendment to the product specification for a name in the wine sector, as referred to in Article 17(2) and (3) of Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2019/33

(C/2025/2024)

This communication is published in accordance with Article 17(5) of Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2019/33 [1].

COMMUNICATING THE APPROVAL OF A STANDARD AMENDMENT

'Blaye'

PDO-FR-A0712-AM03

Date of communication: 13 January 2025

DESCRIPTION OF AND REASONS FOR THE APPROVED AMENDMENT

1. Geographical area

Point IV – Geographical area – of the product specification has been amended on the basis of the Official Geographic Code, which recognises and lists the municipalities by department at national level. This editorial amendment allows the geographical area to be identified with reference to the current version of the Official Geographic Code, which is issued by the National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE), and gives the definition of the geographical area legal certainty.

Point 6 of the single document has been amended.

2. Demarcated area

The demarcated parcel area has been changed to introduce a procedure for identifying the parcels from which the grapes are harvested.

The parcels are identified by an expert committee on the basis of criteria relating to their location.

Any producer wishing to have a vineyard parcel identified must send a request to the group, which will forward a copy of this request to the National Institute of Origin and Quality before 31 March of the harvest year.

The list of new parcels identified is approved each year by the competent national committee of the National Institute of Origin and Quality following an opinion from the above-mentioned expert committee.

The lists of criteria and parcels identified may be obtained from the National Institute of Origin and Quality and from the relevant defence and management organisation.

The single document is not affected.

3. Area in immediate proximity

The area in immediate proximity, defined by derogation for wine-growing, production and ageing, has been deleted.

This affects point 9 of the single document.

4. Vine varieties

The variety Côt N (or Malbec) changes from a secondary variety to a main variety.

The rules on planting proportions have been revised.

The main grape varieties must together account for 85 % of the varieties grown, up from 50 %.

[1] OJ L 9, 11.1.2019, p. 2.

The required proportion of the secondary grape varieties Carmenère N and Petit Verdot N has been deleted.

The rules on blends have also been amended.

It has also been specified that the designation is a blended wine of at least two grape varieties, with a proportion of Merlot of at least 50 %.

Accordingly, the rules on proportion concerning the main varieties have been deleted.

The single document is not affected.

5. **Planting density**

The rule on spacing between rows has been amended and the rule on spacing between plants has been deleted and replaced by a new provision, stating that each plant must have a maximum area of 1.67 m^2, as obtained by multiplying the distance between the rows by the distance between the plants in the same row.

The value of 1.67 m^2 is directly correlated to density/ha. The minimum planting density has not been changed.

This affects point 5.1.1 of the single document.

6. **Training systems – Agri-environmental provisions**

The following environmental provisions have been added:

— Dead vines must be removed from the parcels. No dead vines may be kept on the parcels.

— Chemical weed control is prohibited on headlands.

— Full chemical weed control on parcels is prohibited.

— Plastic mulching is prohibited.

— All winegrowers must calculate and record their treatment frequency index.

— Any substantial alteration of the morphology of the subsoil, topsoil or elements guaranteeing the integrity and sustainability of the soils of a parcel intended for the production of the protected designation of origin is prohibited, with the exception of ordinary trench ploughing.

These amendments are designed to take better account of the environment and of societal demands for less use of plant protection products.

The single document is not affected.

7. **Winemaking practices**

Enrichment is now strictly prohibited. This previously authorised practice had not been implemented.

This affects point 5.1.3 of the single document.

8. **Date for circulation between authorised warehouses**

The date of entry into circulation of the wines between authorised warehouses has been deleted in order to allow the wines to circulate between all the operators located in the area.

The single document is not affected.

9. **Date of release for consumption**

The date of 31 March has been replaced by 1 April.

The single document is not affected.

10. **Link**

The Link part of the single document (point 8) has been brought into line with that of the product specification. The section on grape varieties and blending has been revised in line with the amendments to the product specification.

11. **Transitional measures**

The transitional measures relating to the demarcated area and planting density which have expired have been deleted. The associated record-keeping requirement has also been deleted.

The single document is not affected.

12. **Declaration requirements**

A requirement for prior declaration of works has been added, in line with the agri-environmental provision provided for in the event of a substantial alteration of the soil.

Derogations from the declaration prior to the sale of wine in bulk and prior to market preparation for continuous or semi-continuous operators have been deleted.

The single document is not affected.

13. **Table of main points to be checked**

The table has been updated in the light of the changes to the product specification.

The single document is not affected.

14. **Reference to the inspection body**

The reference to the inspection body has been reworded to align it with the wording used in other product specifications. This is a purely editorial amendment.

The single document is not affected.

15. **Other editorial changes**

The wording of the product specification has been adjusted on purely editorial points.

The single document is not affected.

SINGLE DOCUMENT

1. **Name(s)**

Blaye

2. **Type of geographical indication**

PDO – protected designation of origin

3. **Categories of grapevine products**

1. Wine

3.1. *Combined Nomenclature code*

— 22 – BEVERAGES, SPIRITS AND VINEGAR

2204 – Wine of fresh grapes, including fortified wines; grape must other than that of heading 2009

4. **Description of the wine(s)**

BRIEF WRITTEN DESCRIPTION

The wines are still, dry, red wines. They have a minimum natural alcoholic strength by volume of 12 % and after enrichment do not exceed the total alcoholic strength by volume of 14 %. Every batch of wine sold has a malic acid content of 0,3 grams per litre or less. Every batch of wine sold has a fermentable sugar (glucose and fructose) content of 3 grams per litre or less. Every batch of wine sold in bulk has a volatile acidity content less than or equal to 13,27 meq/l. Every batch of wine sold in bulk has a total sulphur dioxide content of 140 milligrams per litre or less.

These still red wines are made mainly from the Merlot N variety, which is well adapted to the clay-limestone hillsides, where it reaches a high level of maturity. It gives full-bodied, powerful wines with a strong red colour, often with intense aromatic notes of red fruit, frequently evolving during ageing to hints of spice.

Blends with the other main varieties, namely Cabernet Franc N and Cabernet Sauvignon N, add freshness and structure, thereby enhancing the wines' ageing potential and aromatic complexity. Côt N (or Malbec), also a main variety, gives wines which are particularly suitable for ageing, rich in tannins, concentrated, powerful and highly coloured, with notes of spice and black fruit.

Lastly, secondary varieties such as Carmenère N or Petit Verdot N add to the richness and complexity of these wines.

General analytical characteristics

— Maximum total alcoholic strength (in % volume): —

— Minimum actual alcoholic strength (in % volume) —

— Minimum total acidity: in milliequivalents per litre

— Maximum volatile acidity (in milliequivalents per litre): —

— Maximum total sulphur dioxide (in milligrams per litre): —

5. **Winemaking practices**

5.1. *Specific oenological practices*

1. Planting density

Cultivation method

The minimum vine planting density is 6 000 plants per hectare.

The spacing between the rows is 2 metres or less.

Each plant has an area not exceeding 1,67 m^2, a figure obtained by multiplying the distance between the rows by the distance between plants in the same row.

2. Pruning rules

Cultivation method

Pruning is carried out at the unfolded leaves stage (Lorenz stage 9) at the latest.

Only spur or cane pruning is authorised, with a maximum of:

— 45 000 buds per hectare for the Merlot N variety;

— 50 000 for the other varieties..

The maximum number of buds per plant is 10.

3. Enrichment

Specific oenological practice

Enrichment is prohibited.

5.2. *Maximum yields*

1.

60 hectolitres per hectare

6. **Demarcated geographical area**

The grapes are harvested and the wines made, developed and aged in the following municipalities:

Department of Gironde

Anglade, Berson, Blaye, Braud-et-Saint-Louis, Campugnan, Cars, Cartelègue, Cavignac, Cézac, Civrac-de-Blaye, Cubnezais, Donnezac, Etauliers, Eyrans, Fours, Générac, Laruscade, Marcenais, Marsas, Mazion, Plassac, Pleine-Selve, the part of the municipality of Pugnac that belonged to Lafosse before they merged on 1 July 1974, Reignac, Saint-Androny, Saint-Aubin-de-Blaye, Saint-Christoly-de-Blaye, Saint-Ciers-sur-Gironde, Saint-Genès-de Blaye, Saint-Girons-d'Aiguevives, Saint-Mariens, Saint-Martin-Lacaussade, Saint-Palais, Saint-Paul, Saint Savin, Saint-Seurin-de-Cursac, Saint-Vivien-de-Blaye, Saint-Yzan-de-Soudiac, Saugon and Val de Livenne.

7. **Wine grape variety(ies)**

Cabernet Franc N

Cabernet Sauvignon N

Carménère N

Côt N - Malbec

Merlot N

Petit Verdot N

8. **Description of the link(s)**

8.1. *Description of the natural factors relevant to the link*

The geographical area of the 'Blaye' protected designation of origin is situated in the northern part of the department of Gironde, on the right bank of the Gironde estuary. The presence of the estuary, with sea air coming in from the ocean, together with a sustained period of sunshine (240 days per year), give this region a temperate climate and very favourable conditions for winegrowing. This geographical area comprises 40 municipalities from the three former cantons of Blaye, Saint-Ciers-sur-Gironde and Saint-Savin.

The oceanic climate, in some years combined with periods of rain and low pressure in autumn, or, conversely, hot and very sunny late seasons, creates a notable 'vintage effect'.

The Blaye area has three types of land structure: an estuarine part of limestone hillsides drained to the west and south-west by a short, dense network of waterways, an internal part with a more clayey plateau drained to the north by a long network of waterways causing minimal fragmentation of the landscape and, lastly, a sandier hinterland region to the north and east with only a few ephemeral water courses which have very little topographical impact.

The geological diversity of the region is reflected in the nature of the soil. The limestone base has a thin layer of brown soil, low in clay and often rendzina in type. Within the plateau, the brown soil becomes more clayey, tending towards sandy on the slopes. To the north and east of the geographical area, the local sand and gravel soil is mostly grey to black, acidic soil, often resting on a ferric, 'hardpan' type sub-soil. These podzols take various different forms. The precise characterisation of the different soil types present in the geographical area of the 'Blaye' designation was established by means of a soil survey carried out in May 2015.

The geographical area of the 'Blaye' designation thus presents two main types of landscape. The plateaux and slopes which dominate the estuary are very marked by winegrowing. Structured around the town of Blaye and its citadel, small rural towns, villages and hamlets are scattered throughout the vineyards, with some small woodland areas mainly in the valleys. On the plateaux of the eastern part, vines are grown in conjunction with livestock farming and occur more often in the form of clearings within an environment of heathland or maritime pine woodland.

8.2. *Description of the human factors relevant to the link*

Since antiquity, the Romans who had settled in this region established winegrowing and started developing the wine trade. Wine estates grew rapidly along the estuary shoreline, benefiting from dynamic, flourishing maritime transport.

In the Middle Ages, vineyards were confined to the vicinity of the Port of Blaye. Under Louis XIV, the strategic position of the town of Blaye was strengthened by the construction of the citadel by Vauban. This new military vocation considerably disrupted commercial activity in the region.

In the course of the 18th century, with a return to relative calm in the area, experimentation with new vine varieties, optimised cultivation methods and innovative winemaking processes, such as ageing in barrels and then bottles using the 'brimstone candle' technique ('Dutch match' in French) with a sulphur-dipped wick (ENJALBERT, H. *La naissance des grands vins et la formation du vignoble moderne de Bordeaux: 1647-1767, 1978*), brought about a revival in the wine market and new prosperity.

Vineyards in this region were not spared the scourges of the 19th century (powdery mildew, mildew and phylloxera). Blaye wine production thus plummeted in 1853 to 10 % of the normal harvest. At the start of the 20th century, following proceedings against a landowner, a judgment of 18 July 1929 by the Civil Court of Blaye defined the designation 'Blaye' or 'Blayais' for red and white wines produced in the three cantons of Blaye, Saint-Ciers-sur-Gironde and Saint-Savin. The geographical area was confirmed by the Decree of 11 September 1936, which recognises the protected designation of origin 'Blaye' or 'Blayais'.

Following a drop in claims at the end of the 1980s, the *Syndicat viticole des appellations 'Blaye' et 'Premières Côtes de Blaye'* (Blaye and Premières Côtes de Blaye Winegrowers' Union) undertook a review of production conditions. These production conditions were first laid down in a charter and then in the product specification.

8.3. *Causal interactions*

This region, situated at the junction between the departments of Gironde, Charente and Charente Maritime, offers a diversity of environments and landscapes where, over time, winegrowers have successfully created a common identity. Although local know-how originally led winegrowers to produce red and white wines, since the recognition of the designations, the vineyards have been planted predominantly with red varieties.

Among the old Bordeaux vineyards, varieties under the 'Blaye' designation, cultivated in an oceanic climate, needed to be grown on stakes as of the 18th century. This was followed by the generalisation of trellising and a pruning method severe enough to ensure that the grapes were well distributed and that there was enough canopy for photosynthesis to allow optimal maturity.

The soils on which the vines are planted at particularly high densities for the region have adequate drainage (natural or man-made), and are the source of the strength and roundness of the wines.

Thanks to the precise characterisation of the soils in the designation area, the parcels, which have been carefully selected mainly on plateaux or slopes, optimise the qualities of the local varieties, which were historically chosen for their keeping quality and suitability for ageing, so that the wines could be transported over long distances. In order to ensure a satisfactory harvest without overloading the vines, thereby guaranteeing a high proportion of fruit, planting density is high.

The wines are aged at least until 15 March of the year following the harvest. This long ageing period is necessary to stabilise, refine and enhance the qualities of the wine.

'Blaye' is now a jewel in the range of protected designations of origin of North Gironde.

9. **Essential further conditions (packaging, labelling, other requirements)**

Broader geographical unit

Legal framework:

National legislation

Type of further condition:

Additional provisions relating to labelling

Description of the condition:

Wines with the controlled designation of origin may specify on their labels the broader geographical unit 'Vin de Bordeaux' or 'Grand Vin de Bordeaux'.

The size of the letters used for this broader geographical unit must not be larger, either in height or in width, than two thirds of the size of the letters forming the name of the protected designation of origin.

Link to the product specification

https://info.agriculture.gouv.fr/gedei/site/bo-agri/document_administratif-7b05ccc5-8789-4e3c-abea-2774b314886b