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*(Announcements)*

# OTHER ACTS

# EUROPEAN COMMISSION

## Publication of an application pursuant to Article 50(2)(a) of Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council on quality schemes for agricultural products and foodstuffs

(2014/C 443/06)

This publication confers the right to oppose the application pursuant to Article 51 of Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council [1].

SINGLE DOCUMENT

**COUNCIL REGULATION (EC) No 510/2006**

**on the protection of geographical indications and designations of origin for agricultural products and foodstuffs** [2]

**'HOLLANDSE GEITENKAAS'**

**EC No: NL-PGI-0005-01176 — 6.11.2013**

**PGI ( X ) PDO ( )**

1. **Name**

'Hollandse geitenkaas'

2. **Member State or Third Country**

Netherlands

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

3.1. *Type of product*

Class 1.3: Cheeses

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

'Hollandse geitenkaas' is a traditional, geographical name for a semi-hard, natural or foil-ripened cheese product produced in the Netherlands, prepared in a comparable way to Gouda cheese, made from goat's milk originating from goat-rearing holdings based in the Netherlands. 'Hollandse geitenkaas' is ripened into a product ready for consumption, either naturally with rind formation or as rindless cheese in foil packaging. Natural ripening with rind formation must take place only in the Netherlands. The ripening period is four weeks, with a minimum of 25 days.

Characteristics:

Colour: During ripening the colour ranges from white in the case of young and matured 'Hollandse geitenkaas' to ivory-coloured in the case of old 'Hollandse geitenkaas'.

[1] OJ L 343, 14.12.2012, p. 1.
[2] OJ L 93, 31.3.2006, p 12. Replaced by Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012.

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|---|---|
| Texture: | 'Hollandse geitenkaas' is slightly soft to pliable at an age of four weeks. It becomes firmer as its moisture content decreases. |
| Composition: | The milk supplied to the cheese-making farms has a fat content of 2,8-6,2 % and a protein content of 2,6-4,4 %.<br>Herbs, spices and vegetables, such as nettle, fenugreek, thyme and tomato, may be added to the cheese provided that their characteristic taste is discernible in the end product. |
| Fat content: | At least 50 % and at most 60 % in dry matter. |
| Moisture content: | At most 44 % 14 days after curdling. |
| Salt content: | At most 4,1 % in dry matter. |
| Taste: | Soft, mild and clean. The flavour and smell become stronger/more intense as the cheese ripens. |
| Cross section: | After slicing, the cheese has a closed cross section or contains holes distributed uniformly or non-uniformly. |
| Rind: | When ripened naturally, the rind is firm, smooth, dry and clean and has no fungal flora. Although foil-packaged 'Hollandse geitenkaas' does not have a hard rind, it is also pressed and soaked in brine. Foil-ripened 'Hollandse geitenkaas' should be firm, smooth, dry and clean and have no fungal flora. |
| Ripening temperature: | 10-14 °C when ripened naturally and 4-7 °C in the case of foil ripening. |
| Shelf life: | A minimum of 28 days after manufacture to more than one year. |

Other characteristics:

The cheese has a flat cylindrical or angular shape or is in the form of a loaf or block and weighs between 1,5 and 20 kg. A flat cylindrical shape is a round shape with sides that curve smoothly into a flat top and bottom and a height that is a quarter to a half of the diameter. An angular shape is a flat cylindrical shape with one curved edge and one sharp edge. The term 'loaf-shaped' describes a rectangular cheese.

The goat's milk is curdled using an animal or microbial rennet at a temperature of at least 28 °C and no more than 32 °C. The milk is curdled by adding a microbial mixed culture of appropriate mesophilic starter cultures for 'Hollandse geitenkaas', consisting of *Lactococcus* variants, combined usually with *Leuconostoc* variants and possibly with thermophilic *Lactobacillus* and/or *Lactococcus* cultures.

In a conditioned brine bath the temperature, salt content and pH are kept as constant as possible. 'Hollandse geitenkaas' is soaked in a brine bath with a salt content of at least 17 °Baumé and at most 20 °Baumé. The pH is below 4,8 and the temperature is at least 10 °C and at most 16 °C.

3.3. *Raw materials (for processed products only)*

'Hollandse geitenkaas' is made using pasteurised whole goat's milk, goat's (whey) cream, skimmed or semi-skimmed goat's milk originating from Dutch dairy goat holdings.

Milk from other animals may not be used.

Semi-hard 'Hollandse geitenkaas' is made from milk of the Dutch White Goat or cross-breeds of the Dutch White with other typical breeds of dairy goat.

The consistent quality and mild flavour of Dutch goat's milk are the result of a monitored rearing system, craftsmanship and the use of a quality assurance programme (throughout the chain).

The quality assurance programme enables dairy goat farmers to produce goat's milk of consistently high quality. The programme sets out criteria for areas including operational hygiene, veterinary medicines, animal health and welfare, feed and drinking water, milk production and cooling.

The quality assurance programme for dairy goat holdings satisfies, as a minimum, the EU hygiene requirements and is monitored by the Dutch Controlling Authority for Milk and Milk Products (*Centraal Orgaan voor Kwaliteitsaangelegenheden in de Zuivel*, COKZ).

Each delivery of goat's milk is sampled. The fat content, protein content and various quality parameters of samples are analysed. Payments to the goat farmers are based on those basic milk quality data. COKZ oversees the entire process of sampling and sampling analysis and the correct processing of the results.

3.4. *Feed (for products of animal origin only)*

Dutch goats are fed on grass silage and/or maize silage of Dutch origin, piece feed and straw. Supplements such as linseed, pressed pulp and brewers' grains are permitted. Feed provided by external suppliers must satisfy the requirements of the dairy goat holdings quality assurance programme and the relevant European animal feed regulations. Dairy goats are not given feed liable to adversely affect their milk and cheese (smell, mild flavour, etc.), such as onion.

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

The goat's milk used to make 'Hollandse geitenkaas' is obtained from dairy goat holdings based in the Netherlands. 'Hollandse geitenkaas' is produced and naturally ripened in the Netherlands.

The characteristic phases of the production process are set out below:

— The goat's milk is produced by the goats and obtained by the farmer on the farm. A maximum of eight milkings are stored in cooled tanks on the farm at a temperature of no more than 6 °C.

— Certified milk collection drivers sample the goat's milk, collect it and deliver it to the cheese dairies.

— The milk is received by the cheese dairies and stored in tanks.

— The cheese is made by pasteurising the milk at a minimum temperature of 71,8 °C for at least 15 seconds. Rennet and lactic acid are added to the pasteurised goat's milk.

— After curdling and treatment, the whey is removed and the cheese is placed in the moulds and pressed.

— The cheese is soaked in a brine bath. The diameter and the shape of the cheese determine how long it is soaked. The salt content of the cheese may not exceed 4,1 % in dry matter.

— The cheese is naturally ripened in a conditioned climate for a minimum period of 25 days, during which it is regularly turned and a food coating is applied to prevent the formation of mould. The ripening temperature is 10-14 °C. Natural ripening with rind formation is carried out in the Netherlands to ensure that the rind is dry. The ripening time and temperature are important in order to impart the desired organoleptic qualities to the cheese. The expertise developed in the Netherlands in the ripening of semi-hard cheese is what gives 'Hollandse geitenkaas' its quality and flavour. Foil-packaged cheese is ripened for at least 25 days in a refrigerator at a temperature of 4-7 °C. Foil-packaged cheese can also be ripened outside the Netherlands. Because of the foil, it is merely necessary to monitor the temperature. Ripening expertise is in this case less important.

3.6. *Specific rules concerning slicing, grating, packaging, etc.*

N/A

3.7. *Specific rules concerning labelling*

A 'Hollandse geitenkaas' casein mark is placed on each naturally ripened cheese of that name. Foil-ripened 'Hollandse geitenkaas' has no casein mark.

## 4. Concise definition of the geographical area

The geographical area covered by the application is the European part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, also known by the traditional name 'Holland'.

## 5. Link with the geographical area

5.1. *Specificity of the geographical area*

Summary

From time immemorial the soil and climatic conditions in the Netherlands have made it a country ideally suited to arable and livestock farming. These conditions also make it ideally suited to the rearing of dairy goats.

This, along with the use of typical dairy breeds, the feeding and rearing practices employed, the rich tradition of cheese-making and the local craftsmanship, has created conditions conducive to the use of goat's milk to make 'Hollandse geitenkaas' in the European part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

Geography

The combination of temperature, soil composition and rainfall has long made the Netherlands a country ideally suited to arable and livestock farming, including the rearing of dairy goats.

The Netherlands has a maritime climate in which the sea and wind are important factors. The presence of large bodies of water (the North Sea and Ijsselmeer) means that there is less variation in temperature than in other countries. The water has a moderating effect on the temperature. In the Netherlands the long-term average annual temperature varies from 8,9 to 10,4 °C and the average annual rainfall from 700 to 950 mm (www.knmi.nl).

Dutch soils are primarily clay, sandy and peat soils suited to farming and the production of livestock feed crops. The groundwater level is an important indicator. The wet areas, in particular, are mainly suitable for growing grass, for example, for use in livestock farming.

Dairy goat

'Hollandse geitenkaas' is made from milk of the Dutch White Goat or cross-breeds of the Dutch White with other typical breeds of dairy goat. The Saanen dairy goats imported from Switzerland between 1880 and 1920 played an important part in the history of dairy goat rearing in the Netherlands. The imported goats were crossed with the indigenous breeds. Villages set up their own breeding associations which were coordinated at provincial level under the aegis of the Dutch Goat Breeding Organisation (*Nederlandse Organisatie voor de Geitenfokkerij*, NOG) which also founded the Dutch dairy goat register. The national objective was soon established: to breed a large, sturdy, hornless goat with a high feed intake capacity and milk production level.

The developments outlined above have made the Dutch dairy goat one of the most efficient milk producers in the world. The average production level of Dutch dairy goats continues to rise each year as a result of first-class management and their good genetics.

Product and craftsmanship

The Netherlands, which has been making cheese since the Middle Ages, has a rich history of cheese-making and craftsmanship. From the 18th century it acquired expertise in making Gouda cheese. The knowledge and expertise developed in the Netherlands in the making of Gouda cheese have had a significant influence on the production of 'Hollandse geitenkaas'. The expertise in making Gouda semi-hard cheese was transferred directly to the production of goat's cheese, helping greatly to develop the uniform quality and flavour of the product.

The focus on craftsmanship and the quality and flavour of semi-hard cheeses produced in the Netherlands is demonstrated by the Dutch National Cheese Tasting Competition (*Nederlands Nationaal Kaaskeurconcours*, NNKC) events which have been held for over half a century. Experts from the cheese sector practise and test their ability to distinguish between cheeses and their flavours, including the distinctive flavour of 'Hollandse geitenkaas'.

Organisation and logistics

Because the Netherlands is a small country and distances are short, there is a good deal of contact and knowledge-sharing between farmers and producers and/or production monitoring organisations. Over the centuries, the craftsmanship of dairy farmers and cheese-makers has reached a high and uniform standard, partly as a result of research, education and information promoted by the Dutch authorities. The knowledge and applied scientific research currently pooled in the Wageningen University and Research Centre clusters is thus still today a model of high-level organisation and the practical application of knowledge of areas including cheese-making and education.

5.2. *Specificity of the product*

Product and craftsmanship

'Hollandse geitenkaas' has a soft, mild and clean taste. The cheese acquires this mild, tart flavour after four weeks when ripened naturally and after a longer period when foil-ripened. It is not soapy and has little or no bitterness. The naturally ripened variant becomes firmer, its flavour more intense, as the cheese ripens and its moisture content decreases.

'Hollandse geitenkaas' is a semi-hard, natural or foil-ripened cheese product prepared in a comparable way to Gouda cheese, made from pasteurised goat's milk. The production of Gouda cheese is characterised by the use of mesophilic starter cultures, sometimes supplemented by thermophilic cultures, the process of curdling the milk, the shaping of the cheese by pressing and the salting of the cheese by soaking it in a conditioned brine bath.

Natural ripening is carried out under conditions also derived from the traditional production of Gouda, i.e. the cheese is left open to the air to ripen and is regularly turned and checked. Cheese ripened in this way develops a dry rind. Following the characteristic pressing and soaking, foil-ripened 'Hollandse geitenkaas' is packaged in foil and ripened cold. As a result, no hard rind is formed and the mild flavour of young goat's cheese is preserved for longer.

'Hollandse geitenkaas' is made only from goat's milk. Other types of milk may not be used.

In 1946 the veterinarian and former national livestock farming adviser E.J. Dommerhold described in detail the basic recipe for 'Hollandse geitenkaas' and emphasised that it must contain sufficient goat's milk that meets hygiene requirements. The relevant section of the book also describes the addition of herbs. At that time 'Hollandse geitenkaas' was made on a small scale on farms.

Organisation and logistics

From the beginning of the 1980s Dutch dairy cow farmers switched to dairy goat rearing on account of the high milk quota costs. The quantity of goat's milk available for cheese production increased as a result. There was a shift from very small-scale farm production to industrial cheese dairies specialising in the production of 'Hollandse geitenkaas'.

5.3. *Causal link between the geographical area and the quality or characteristics of the product (for PDO) or a specific quality, the reputation or other characteristic of the product (for PGI)*

The protection of 'Hollandse geitenkaas' as a geographical indication is based on the characteristics of geography, product and craftsmanship, the level of organisation and logistics, and its specific reputation.

Geography

The soil composition, the temperate maritime climate and the knowledge of producers in the Netherlands are conducive to the production of goat feed and ensure that the goat's milk is suitable for making 'Hollandse geitenkaas'. This is important to obtain the clean, mild taste of the milk that gives 'Hollandse geitenkaas' its mild flavour.

Dairy goat

Right at the start of the 20th century the Netherlands decided to breed highly productive dairy goats. The ever-increasing average milk yield per goat and the consistent quality and flavour of the goat's milk are the result of proper care, good nutrition, a high health status and the genetics of the goats. The presence of typical, highly productive dairy goats and a culture of Gouda cheese-making are requirements for the production of 'Hollandse geitenkaas'.

Product and craftsmanship

Instructions for rearing goats and making 'Hollandse geitenkaas' are contained in documents dated 1946. Goat-rearing practices and the way in which 'Hollandse geitenkaas' is made are still today based on those instructions.

The knowledge acquired over the years in the rearing of dairy goats in the Netherlands and in the production and maturing of 'Hollandse geitenkaas' has resulted in a unique body of experience. That is why it is important that 'Hollandse geitenkaas' is made from Dutch milk on Dutch dairy farms whose staff have received thorough training in the technology used specifically for this type of cheese.

Organisation and logistics

The small size of the country and its high level of organisation ensure that the sector is well run, with goat farmers being required to participate in a milk quality assurance programme. This is important in order to maintain at all times the high quality of the cheese and of the goat's milk from which it is made.

Reputation

The increase in the availability of goat's milk and in the production of 'Hollandse geitenkaas' meant that consumers 'rediscovered' the cheese as a speciality product in the 1980s. The product's good reputation is demonstrated by the fact that sales figures have since then risen without any large-scale advertising or marketing.

'Hollandse geitenkaas' now occupies a prominent position in Dutch cheese production. The volume of goat's cheese produced in the Netherlands rose from 3 700 tonnes in 2000 to 19 780 tonnes in 2012 (Dutch Dairy Board).

'Hollandse geitenkaas' is nationally and internationally recognised as a high-quality product that is in great demand.

As regards the national reputation of 'Hollandse geitenkaas', a large number of cheese tasters meet annually to assess the flavour of goat's cheese based on a nationally defined product profile (NNKC).

The international reputation of 'Hollandse geitenkaas' is confirmed by the large number of prizes that it has won at international tastings. 'Hollandse geitenkaas' products have for a number of years successfully been entered in cheese competitions such as Madison (USA), DLG (Germany) and Nantwich (UK), for example.

**Reference to publication of the specification**

(Article 5(7) of Regulation (EC) No 510/2006 ([3]))

http://www.eu-streekproducten.nl/sites/default/files/BGA_PD_Hol_Geitenkaas_def.pdf

([3]) See footnote 2.