



Quality logos in the European Union

Last Updated : 02 January 2013

In Europe certain agricultural products and foodstuffs are labelled with an EU origin and quality logo. This logo indicates that the foodstuff exhibits special characteristics derived from the geographical location in which it is produced or from its traditional composition or production method. The logo informs customers of the quality, origin and/or authenticity of the foodstuff.

EU agricultural quality policy

The production of agricultural products and foodstuffs is an important part of the European economy, and efforts to improve food quality have been part of EU agricultural policy since the 1980s.¹ Many agricultural products and foodstuffs exhibit special characteristics linked to their geographical origin, traditional composition or production method. Since 1992, the EU has protected the names of these agricultural products and foodstuffs, i.e. it established conditions under which their names are legally protected against imitation throughout the EU. It is equivalent to a type of intellectual property.² The legislation ensures that the specific and traditional characteristics of these foodstuffs are preserved.

Quality product designations

Under European policy on quality agricultural products, producers can register and protect the names of certain agricultural products and foodstuffs under three different schemes:^{3,4}

1. Protected Designation of Origin (PDO)



This applies to food produced, processed and prepared within a geographical location and possessing qualities or characteristics exclusive to that geographical location, e.g. Roquefort cheese must be made with milk from Lacaune or black breeds of sheep, matured in natural caves near Roquefort in Aveyron France, using spores of *Penicillium roqueforti* which grow in these caves.

2. Protected Geographic Indication (PGI)



This is similar to the PDO except the geographical link is not as strong, i.e. at least one of the stages of production, processing or preparation must occur within that geographical location. Furthermore, it must possess a specific quality or reputation or characteristic attributable to the geographical location, e.g. Salame Cremona, Edam cheese.

3. Traditional Specialities Guaranteed (TSG)



This applies to food that has a traditional character i.e. has proven usage on the EU market for at least 25 years and specific characteristics which distinguish it from other foodstuffs belonging to a similar category, made to the traditional specification e.g. Mozzarella cheese, Jamón Serrano.

Registered products must be labelled with the relevant logo.⁵ The requirements which must be met before an agricultural product or foodstuff can be registered under one of the schemes are set down in legislation.^{1,6} Application for registration must be made to the relevant national authority of a European Member State. If the application is deemed acceptable, it is sent to the European Commission for approval. However, applications are published at all stages of review and are open to objections from third parties.

The benefits of PDO/PGI/TSG

under PDO and PGI gives exclusive rights to the producer(s) who made the original application, plus any other producer who can meet the requirements of the scheme, to use the registered and protected product name. Regarding PDOs and PGIs, producers outside the geographical location are explicitly excluded from using the registered name. Use of the approved logos enables producers to inform their consumers of the quality and authenticity of their products, allowing informed choice. Finally, several studies have shown these schemes make a very valuable contribution to sustainable rural development e.g. local plant varieties are conserved, rural diversity and social cohesion are supported and job opportunities are created.⁴

Products and value of the EU system

To date over 1000 agricultural products and foodstuffs have been registered across the schemes.⁵ Of this total, 97% have PDO or PGI status, with Italy, France and Spain having registered over 50% of all products.⁵ In 2007 it was estimated that PDO/PGI agricultural products had contributed a wholesale value of €14.2 billion to the EU economy.⁷ Cheese products account for a third of total PDO/PGI turnover with 8% of the cheese produced in the EU protected, including Comté, Queso Manchego and Feta.⁷ The full list of all registered products can be found on the EU Database Of Origin and Registration (DOOR).⁸

The future

Consumers are attaching an ever greater importance to the provenance and sensory qualities of foodstuffs, generating demand for products with an identifiable geographical origin.¹ The current EU quality schemes, protect product names from misuse and imitation and provide consumers with information on the specific characteristics of the products.⁷

References

1. [Regulation \(EC\) No 510/2006 of 20 March 2006 on the Protection of geographical indications and designations of origin for agricultural products and foodstuffs.](#)
2. [European Commission website \(2011\). Intellectual property. Geographical indications.](#)
3. [European Commission \(2012\). Geographical indications and traditional specialties.](#)
4. [European Commission \(2007\). Factsheet - European policy for quality agricultural products.](#)
5. [European Union \(2011\). Background note - 1000th quality food name registered. MEMO/11/84.](#)
6. [Regulation \(EC\) No 509/2006 of 20 March 2006 on agricultural products and foodstuffs as traditional specialties guaranteed.](#)
7. [European Commission \(2010\). Newsletter - PDO and PGI agricultural products: a 14.2 billion euro turnover for over 800 products.](#)
8. [EU database DOOR.](#)