

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

(2013/C 231/10)

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⁾****‘WEST COUNTRY LAMB’****EC No: UK-PGI-0005-0667-21.12.2007****PGI (X) PDO ()****1. Name**

‘West Country Lamb’

2. Member State or Third Country

United Kingdom

3. Description of the agricultural product or foodstuff**3.1. Type of product**

Class 1.1. Fresh meat (and offal)

3.2. Description of product to which the name in point 1 applies

‘West Country Lamb’ is the name applied to carcasses, sides or cuts of lamb derived from sheep born and raised in the West Country region of England and slaughtered in accordance with Meat South West (MSW) or equivalent standards.

The sheep must be no more than 12 months old at the time of slaughter. The meat from animals that are (i) born before 1 October in any year and (ii) slaughtered between 1 January and 30 April the following year must be subjected to maturation. This may comprise a minimum of five days refrigerated conditioning between slaughter and sale to the final consumer, or one of the maturation processes specified in the 1994 Meat & Livestock Commission (MLC) Lamb Blueprint (these include electrical stimulation and hip suspension). The finished weight must be between 9 kg and 26 kg dead weight.

The specific grass-based diet improves the chemical composition of lamb muscle (see Table 1 below) and also improves organoleptic qualities of the meat when compared to concentrate fed sheep.

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 343, 14.12.2012, p. 1.

⁽²⁾ Replaced by Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012.

Table 1

Fatty acid composition (mg/100 g) and vitamin E content (mg/kg) of lamb loin muscle

	Grass	Concentrates
18:2 ⁽¹⁾	98	143
18:3 ⁽²⁾	52	29
EPA ⁽³⁾	23	15
DHA ⁽⁴⁾	6,5	4,9
Vitamin E	4,6	1,9
18:2/18:3	1,9	5,0

⁽¹⁾ Linoleic.

⁽²⁾ Linolenic.

⁽³⁾ Eicosapentaenoic.

⁽⁴⁾ Docosahexaenoic.

This results in more richly flavoured meat, giving an excellent eating experience. The colour of the fat can be from white to cream, but the specific diet encourages a cream colour. The meat colour varies from pink to dark red, with the maturation resulting in the meat being darker red. The carcass classification specification (based on the EUROP system), to ensure optimum eating quality, is:

- carcasses classified as conformation R or better, with a fatness of 2 to 3H,
- carcasses weighing less than 15 kg may have conformation O.

Improving conformation $\hat{=}$	Increasing fatness =>							
		1	2	3L	3H	4L	4HL	5
E								
U								
R								
O			9-15 kg	9-15 kg	9-15 kg			
P								

Carcass size may vary, reflecting market preferences and the type of sheep.

After slaughter 'West Country Lamb' is marketed to the trade in a number of forms as follows:

- whole carcass excluding inedible offal, hide, head and feet. The kidneys and associated fat may be left *in situ*,
- whole side: half the carcass split lengthwise,
- primal cuts: produced by dividing carcasses/sides into smaller, recognised parts (to satisfy customer preferences). These cuts may be presented bone-in or boneless and in protective packaging.

'West Country Lamb' may be sold fresh (refrigerated) or frozen.

3.3. Raw materials (for processed products only)

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

The lambs may be fed supplement at the weaning and finishing stage, in which case, the details of the ingredients and purchase are recorded by the farmer in the feed log and checked by the assurance inspectors to ensure a minimum forage intake of 70 %. The scheme requires an extensive system with a suitable period of grazing, typically two months, prior to slaughter.

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

The lambs must be born, reared and finished within the West Country region.

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

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3.7. *Specific rules concerning labelling*

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

The geographical area consists of the six counties of Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Gloucestershire, Somerset and Wiltshire, which together make up the West Country region of England.

5. **Link with the geographical area**

5.1. *Specificity of the geographical area*

The West Country of England is described as a grassland peninsula. The distinction between grassland and arable farming has developed partly as the result of the different soil type. The West Country has a high proportion of gley and brown soils which support grass growth but are not ideally suited to arable farming. Arable growing areas have a higher proportion of clay and sandy soils, more easily drained. Further, the West Country of England has the highest average temperature and the highest minimum and maximum temperatures in the UK.

The West Country is the largest, most agricultural region in England. Its environment is one of the richest in the UK. Its farms produce an estimated 21 % of sheep in England and it is this, together with its 24 % share of beef production, which has helped shape and maintain the landscape and heritage of the region. The high density of livestock has encouraged the development of a large meat processing sector which creates much-needed employment opportunities in the region.

The West Country's combination of warm and mild temperatures, well-distributed rainfall through the year, and deep moisture-retentive soils means the grass and forage crops can be made and grazed for almost all the year. Grass grows in much of the region for over 300 days of the year. This year-round production is the norm in the West Country and explains why livestock production predominates. In addition, over 25 % of West Country grassland is situated either in National Parks or Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) and the region has over 57 % of the UK's flower-rich meadows. Research undertaken by Bristol University shows that lamb flavour is deeper and more liked on grass than concentrate feeding.

Additionally, because of the unique mild climate and year-round grass growth, lambs are produced in the region throughout the year.

5.2. *Specificity of the product*

There is a high reliance on fresh grass and conserved grass in the West Country. This produces a characteristic effect on meat quality and the nutritional value of lamb in terms of fatty acid composition, vitamin E content and sensory quality. Scientific experiments have clearly demonstrated these effects. They showed a difference in fatty acid composition between lambs produced on a grain-based (concentrate) diet and on a grass-based diet (Table 1). Those fed grass had a fatty acid profile which was quite different from those fed concentrate. Linoleic acid and its product (arachidonic acid), both n-6 (omega-6) fatty acids, were higher in muscle of the lambs fed concentrate; and linolenic acid

and its products eicosapentaenoic EPA and docosahexaenoic DHA, all n-3 (omega-3) fatty acids, were higher in muscle of the lambs fed grass. The ratio of n-6 fatty acids to n-3 fatty acids was significantly higher in the animals fed concentrate. The recommended ratio for the human diet is 4 or below which was easily achieved in the grass-fed lamb but not in the concentrate — fed lamb. A simple ratio which distinguishes grass — fed from concentrate — fed lamb is 18:2/18:3, this being 1,9 and 5,0 in Table 1 for grass and concentrate — fed lamb respectively.

Grass, whether fresh or conserved, is a source of α -linolenic acid, which can be converted in the animal to long chain n-3 (omega-3) polyunsaturated fatty acids (PUFA), valuable nutrients in the human diet. Grass also contains vitamin E and both n-3 fatty acids and vitamin E are at higher concentrations in grass-fed sheep. These nutrients also affect the taste of the meat.

Thus, grass and grass forage diets demonstrably produce a distinctive fatty acid profile in muscle that distinguishes them from concentrate diets. Values of around 1,5 % linolenic acid, 0,7 % EPA and > 0,2 % DHA are descriptive of grass-reared lamb. These are % of the fatty acids present, which is the way fatty acid composition is often described. This effect benefits 'West Country Lamb'. Vitamin E found naturally in grass is incorporated into muscle and fat tissue in sheep. Those fed grass silage had at least double the concentration of vitamin E in muscle than those fed concentrate. This causes the meat to retain its bright red colour longer during retail display.

British studies conclude that the taste of lamb is better in grass-finished sheep than grain-fed ones. The score for lamb flavour is much higher with grass compared to concentrate. The score for abnormal flavour is much lower with grass feeding.

An independent report shows the special characteristics to be a low ratio of n-6 to n-3 fatty acids and a high concentration of vitamin E:

- 18:2/18:3 ratio less than 4,
- vitamin E > 3,0 mg/kg loin muscle.

The Polled Dorset and Dorset Horn breeds of sheep are just two examples of regional breeds that have developed to take advantage of the nearly all year round grass growth of the region. These breeds are used by many farmers because of their natural, frequent breeding characteristics which mean they are able to lamb in the autumn. This enables producers to have lambs ready to market from late January onwards. Other lowland flocks lamb in January and February, whereas lambing on the farms located in the upland areas of Bodmin Moor, Dartmoor and Exmoor tends to take place in April and May, thus providing natural year-round production and supply of lambs.

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 West Country of England, as a result of its climate, topography, geology and the consequent lushness of grass production, imparts particular qualities to sheep reared in the region, and thence to the meat from those animals. A high proportion of its farmed area is grass, which is ideally suited to sheep production and can also be used in supplementary feed.

There is a strong and objective scientific case that lamb produced and processed in the West Country of England has qualities that are inherently linked to that geographical area, because of the greater availability of and reliance on grass in the diet, leading to higher concentrations of n-3 PUFA and vitamin E in the meat.

Grass growth is affected by soil type, temperature, rainfall and sunshine. A further important factor is topography i.e. altitude, with grass growth declining as altitude increases. The more favourable climate in the West Country increases the number of grass-growing days in the West Country in comparison with other regions. Grass grows for more than 220 days of the year in all parts of the West Country which is not true of any other part of Britain, with parts achieving over 300 days of grass growth.

Reference to publication of the specification

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

<http://archive.defra.gov.uk/foodfarm/food/industry/regional/foodname/products/documents/wc-lamb-pgi-final-20121127.pdf>

⁽³⁾ See footnote 2.