COMMISSION IMPLEMENTING REGULATION (EU) 2019/1841

of 31 October 2019

entering a name in the register of protected designations of origin and protected geographical indications 'Vlees van het rood ras van West-Vlaanderen' (PDO)

THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION,

Having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,

Having regard to Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 21 November 2012 on quality schemes for agricultural products and foodstuffs ([1]), and in particular Article 52(3)(a) thereof,

Whereas:

(1) Pursuant to Article 50(2)(a) of Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012, application from Belgium to register the name 'Vlees van het rood ras van West-Vlaanderen' as protected designation of origin (PDO) was published in the *Official Journal of the European Union* ([2]).

(2) On 27 July 2018 the Commission received a notice of opposition from France. The related reasoned statement of opposition was received by the Commission on 26 September 2018.

(3) France claimed that the conditions under Article 5 of Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012 are not complied with. It alleged that the name proposed for registration as PDO 'Vlees van het rood ras van West-Vlaanderen' is not attached to any specific place. It just identifies the bovine breed 'Red breed of West Flanders' from which the meat is produced according to the related product specifications.

(4) In addition, France also claimed that the name proposed would be contrary to Article 6(2) because likely to mislead the consumer as to the true origin of the product. Since the name to register contains the term 'ras' meaning 'breed', it would be impossible to differentiate between a meat produced following the product specification of the Protected Designation of Origin and a meat simply obtained from animals of the same breed but not covered by the Protected Designation of Origin. Consequently, a high risk of confusion for the consumer would exist.

(5) Finding such opposition admissible, by letter dated 14 November 2018, the Commission invited Belgium and France to engage in appropriate consultations for a period of three months to seek agreement among themselves in accordance with their internal procedures.

(6) At the request of the applicant the deadline for consultation was extended for three additional months.

(7) An agreement was reached between the parties. Belgium communicated the results of the agreement to the Commission by letter of 14 May 2019. It was clarified that the official name of the breed is 'Rood' and not 'Rood ras van West-Vlaanderen'. Therefore, the geographical element of the name is not part of the name of the breed but it is the geographical component of the name to register and it indicates the origin of the product.

(8) In addition, in the light of the above clear distinction, the name may not be considered likely to mislead the consumer as to the true origin of the product. Complying with the general Union's labelling rules would be sufficient to avoid the risk of misleading the consumers also with reference to translations and in particular to possible conflict with the name of the French breed 'Rouge Flamande'.

(9) Protection should be granted to the name 'Vlees van het rood ras van West-Vlaanderen' as a whole. Producers should be allowed to continue to use individual components of that name, even jointly and also in translation, provided the principles and rules applicable in the Union's legal order are respected.

(10) As it complies with the provisions of Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012 and Union legislation, the content of the agreement concluded between Belgium and France should be taken into account.

([1]) OJ L 343, 14.12.2012, p. 1.
([2]) OJ C 157, 4.5.2018, p. 11.

(11) The texts of the single document and of the product specification were amended accordingly. Such changes made to the single document are deemed not substantial. The herdbook of the breed 'Rood' and the regulations of the applicant group were attached to the product specification.

(12) Since the changes to the single document are not substantial, a repetition of the scrutiny, as provided for in Article 51(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012, is not required. The consolidated version of the single document should, however, be published for information.

(13) In the light of the above, the name 'Vlees van het rood ras van West-Vlaanderen' should be entered in the Register of protected designations of origin and protected geographical indications,

HAS ADOPTED THIS REGULATION:

Article 1

The name 'Vlees van het rood ras van West-Vlaanderen' (PDO) is registered.

The name in the first paragraph identifies a product from Class 1.1. Fresh meat (and offal) of Annex XI to Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 668/2014 ([3]).

The consolidated single document is set out in the Annex to this Regulation.

Article 2

Protection is granted to the name 'Vlees van het rood ras van West-Vlaanderen' as a whole. Individual components of that name may be used, even jointly and also in translation, throughout the Union, provided the principles and rules applicable in the Union's legal order are respected.

Article 3

This Regulation shall enter into force on the twentieth day following that of its publication in the *Official Journal of the European Union*.

This Regulation shall be binding in its entirety and directly applicable in all Member States.

Done at Brussels, 31 October 2019.

For the Commission
The President
Jean-Claude JUNCKER

([3]) Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 668/2014 of 13 June 2014 laying down rules for the application of Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council on quality schemes for agricultural products and foodstuffs (OJ L 179, 19.6.2014, p. 36).

ANNEX

SINGLE DOCUMENT

'VLEES VAN HET ROOD RAS VAN WEST-VLAANDEREN'

EU No: PDO-BE-02261 — 11.1.2017

PDO (X) PGI ( )

1. **Name(s)**

'Vlees van het rood ras van West-Vlaanderen'

2. **Member State or third country**

Belgium

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

3.1. *Type of product*

Fresh meat (and offal)

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

The name 'Vlees van het rood ras van West-Vlaanderen' may be used only for fresh meat from females, aged between three and a half and eight years of age, and steers, aged between two and three and a half years of age, of the 'Red' breed of cattle bred and reared in the province of West Flanders. The carcasses must meet the following specifications:

— Weight: at least 380 kg.

— Conformation: Classes S, E, U, R and O of the SEUROP classification for cattle.

— Fat cover: 2, 3, 4 or 5.

The meat is fairly dark red, with light, fine marbling and a fine-grained texture.

The meat has a full, intense flavour, and the fine streaks of fat give it a touch of creaminess.

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

75-100 % of the coarse fodder (grass and grassland products) given to the cows and steers of the 'Red' breed is produced within the geographical area, chiefly on the holding itself.

At certain times of their lives, the cattle are additionally given a small percentage of concentrated feed.

In the summer, the cattle graze in the fields as soon as, and for as long as, the weather permits. On average, this amounts to seven months between April and November.

In the winter, the fodder consists primarily of local grassland products: haylage and hay.

The grassland products are produced on the holding, but, if necessary, fodder produced locally, within the geographical area, can be bought in. Only in extreme weather conditions (drought or heavy rainfall) can a limited amount of fodder be bought in from neighbouring areas. Each year, the percentage of the fodder coming from outside the geographical area amounts to from 30 % to a maximum of 50 % of the dry matter fed to the animals, and this does not affect the specific characteristics of the meat.

In addition to grassland products, the cattle are given the following:

— in the summer (and only if necessary): locally produced coarse fodder (such as maize, pulp, draff, potatoes, straw, etc.),

— in the winter: coarse fodder and a maximum of 0,5 kg of concentrated feed per day per 100 kg live weight.

The additional coarse fodder referred to above is primarily produced on the holding, but can be bought in if necessary. 75-100 % comes from within the geographical area.

The fattening period lasts a maximum of five months. The fodder is supplemented with concentrated feed up to a maximum of 1 kg per day per 100 kg live weight. The concentrated feed contains cereals and is supplemented with, among other things, linseed cake, fodder beet, potatoes, etc. The animals can be fattened in stalls, either tethered or untethered, or on the pasture.

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

Birth, rearing, fattening, slaughter and butchery must take place within the geographical area.

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

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

The label must display the registered name 'Vlees van het rood ras van West-Vlaanderen' and the EU logo.

4. Concise definition of the geographical area

The geographical area comprises the Belgian province of West Flanders.

5. Link with the geographical area

5.1. *Specificity of the geographical area*

West Flanders lends itself to traditional agriculture with mixed farms. The province is described as follows: 'West Flanders is a low-lying area […]. It enjoys a very favourable maritime climate and consists mainly of very rich agricultural land: behind the line of dunes, the soil is a heavy polder soil; the southern half of the province consists of a fertile sandy loam, while sandy soil is confined to the Bruges-Torhout-Tielt triangle. Apart from in the sandy area, farmers in West Flanders have a whole range of land management and crop rotation possibilities open to them.'

Livestock farming has always occupied an important position in West Flanders, thanks to the proximity of the North Sea and the characteristic maritime climate. The maritime climate is strongly influenced by the warm Gulf Stream in the Atlantic Ocean. This means that there are few really cold or really warm days in West Flanders. This, in combination with the fact that the area has the most hours of sunshine in Belgium, favours a rich growth of grass and grassland products, which are the most important food source for the 'Red' cattle breed. The rich grass produces a tasty meat with a touch of creaminess.

Keepers of 'Red' cattle breed in West Flanders hand their know-how down from generation to generation: the animals are allowed to graze outside as long as the weather permits and are reared primarily on coarse fodder. Furthermore, they are slaughtered quite a bit later than beef cattle of other breeds. Cattle farmers in West Flanders run mixed agricultural holdings which are closely tied to the local traditions and have adapted to the geographical and climatic conditions. Alongside livestock farming, arable crops such as wheat, barley, sugar beet, potatoes and maize are also grown and are traditionally used as coarse fodder for this breed of cattle.

5.2. *Specificity of the breed*

Red cattle have been grazing in West Flanders and the northern part of French Flanders for hundreds of years. In around 1770, there was a homogeneous breeding centre for red cattle. They accounted for 95 % of the region's total cattle population.

After Belgium gained independence in 1830, the different stockfarming approaches adopted by the French and Belgian authorities led to a divide in the breed. In France, priority was given to dairy cattle, which led to the development of the 'rouge des Flandres' or 'Casselloise' breed. In West Flanders it remained a dual-purpose breed.

In 1906, a regional syndicate was set up to maintain a herd book for the whole of West Flanders. The breed was known in Dutch as 'het rood Vlaams ras' (the Flemish Red breed) but was later renamed 'het rood ras van West-Vlaanderen' (the West Flemish Red breed), a name which emphasises the defined breeding area, namely the Belgian province of West Flanders. Since the beginning of the 20th century, the province of West Flanders has deliberately chosen to have a single breed within its borders.

Until the 1970s, up to 80 % of all cattle in West Flanders were of the red breed. The breed was preserved because some West-Flemish farmers deliberately chose it for the specific qualities of the meat. In 1994, it was still the case that 99,6 % of all cattle of this breed were in West Flanders. More recent figures show that this figure is currently still over 95 %.

In 1991, in accordance with the Ministerial Decree on the improvement of the cattle breeds, the breed's official name was 'het Rood ras van België' (the Belgian Red breed). The name of the breed was changed to 'Rood' ('Red') in 2007 following the repeal of that Decree.

5.3. *Specificity of the meat*

The combination of the specific characteristics of the breed and the geographical characteristics of the province of West Flanders produces a distinctive meat.

Over the centuries, the 'Red' breed has adapted to the area's mild maritime climate and the fruits of the rich West Flanders soil. It is commonly said that this breed of cattle converts grass to meat like no other Belgian breed of cattle. The animals spend as long as possible on the pastures of West Flanders and, in the winter, they also receive a rich variety of locally grown coarse fodders.

'Vlees van het rood ras van West-Vlaanderen' differs from other Belgian beef by its full, robust meaty flavour. The meaty flavour is accompanied by a touch of creaminess resulting from the fine marbling. Furthermore, the meat is extremely tender without any loss of flavour. The meat owes its tenderness to its fine structure with a very fine grain. The meat has a beautiful dark red colour.

The specific characteristics of 'Vlees van het rood ras van West-Vlaanderen' are ensured by the breed, the local grass feed and the mature age of the cattle at slaughter.

5.4. *Link between the geographical area and the specific characteristics of the product*

The link between the 'Red' breed and the province of West Flanders goes back centuries. The geographical area encompasses the extensive know-how of the local cattle breeders and the efficient keeping of the herd book just as much as the specific climatic and soil conditions.

The high proportion of local grassland products in the cattle's diet has a positive influence on the flavour of the meat. The favourable maritime climate allows the grass to grow throughout the year, which makes for substantial muscle development and a succulent, finely grained meat. The quality of the meat is a specific characteristic, as the animals are able to range freely on the pastures from a young age and build up muscle mass. The cows have calved several times. Calving and suckling ensure that natural fats develop in the meat, and those fats give 'Vlees van het rood ras van West-Vlaanderen' its creamy flavour.

Given that the animals are older when they are slaughtered, they have been given ample time to grow and develop muscle mass on the basis of high-quality local feed. This means that the meat of these robust red cattle is tender and tasty.

Steers of the 'Red' breed bred and reared in West Flanders also develop their muscle mass. In conventional beef cattle farming, male animals are almost never given the chance to reach such an age. In conventional beef cattle farming, most male cattle are already slaughtered at around 20 months of age. In West Flanders, steers of the 'Red' breed are not slaughtered until they are between two and three and a half years old. This allows the animals to build up considerable muscle mass and produces a tender, finely marbled final product. Another big difference from conventional farming practices is that the cattle are given free range as much as possible and are reared on grassland products and coarse fodder from West Flanders rather than on concentrated feed and maize.

The quality of the meat of the 'Red' cattle bred and reared in West Flanders is reflected in the many references to it on menus, both old and more recent, and in gastronomic literature.

In 2012, 'Vlees van het rood ras van West-Vlaanderen' was recognised as a traditional Flemish regional product.

Today, the meat of the 'Red' cattle bred and reared in the province of West Flanders is held in very high esteem in top gastronomic circles in West Flanders and Belgium as a whole, and there is also demand for this quality product from abroad.

Reference to publication of the specification

(the second subparagraph of Article 6(1) of this Regulation)

https://lv.vlaanderen.be/sites/default/files/attachments/productdossier_vlees_van_het_rood_ras_van_west-vlaanderen_0.pdf