

EU protection of Geographical
Indications, Designations of
Origin and Traditional Specialties
'Authenticity guaranteed'



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Status

Three applications – for Gouda Holland, Edam Holland and Boerenkaas cheese – submitted by Dutch producers in 2003 are currently being processed by the EC.

Facts and figures

- A total of approximately 740 European products are registered as PDO, PGI or TSG.
- Most (more than 20%) of the products that have been granted PDO or PGI status are cheeses, vegetables and fruit. Fresh meat, various types of sausages, oils and fats are also highly represented. 6% of the products that have been granted TSG status are beers.

Period

Ongoing.

Parties involved

Trade and Industry, the Legal Affairs Department of LNV, HPA (with representatives of the Federation of the Dutch Food Industry (FNLI) and all other Product boards), the Consumers' Association, and umbrella interest groups); Streek-eigen Producten Nederland (SPN) – an independent foundation for local Dutch products – supports regional initiatives in the Netherlands that involve region-specific production. Trade and Industry is represented on the Supervisory Board of SPN.

More information

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agriculture, nature
and food quality

Sometimes producers wish to protect their high quality agricultural products from imitation. To do so, they can apply in Brussels for a Protected Designation of Origin, Protected Geographical Indication or a Traditional Speciality Guaranteed status under EC Council Regulations 510/2006 or 509/2006. European protection is an instrument that enables businesses to add value to their products. The project 'European Protection of Geographical and Traditional Products' promotes Dutch interests.

Context

The EU protection categories date back to 1992. Products with unique features were being imitated and sold under the same name. In the 20th century the agricultural sector in the Netherlands focused above all on standardisation and economies of scale. As a result, regional specialities produced on a small scale almost disappeared. A product is granted Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) status if all stages of production, processing and preparation take place in a precisely defined geographical area (also outside the EU) in accordance with recognised and controlled procedures. In the case of Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) status, at least one of the stages of production, processing or preparation must be carried out in the defined geographical area. Traditional Speciality Guaranteed (TSG) status emphasises that a product must possess features that distinguish it from other products, and it must be a traditional product regardless of the place of origin. Above all, Dutch producers making use of the protection system do so in order to have the possibility to establish quality standards that enable their products to stand out. Registration makes the added value clearer to the consumer.

Effects

The cheeses Noord-Hollandse Gouda and Noord-Hollandse Edam, 'Boeren-Leidse met sleutels' and Opperdoezer Ronde potatoes were granted PDO status in 1996. Grapes grown in Westland (Westlandse Druif) and cumin cheeses (Friese Kanterkaas) are now also protected.

Particular aspects

Together with the Product Board for Arable Products (HPA), the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality (LNV) advises on, supports and supervises applications for protection submitted by Dutch producers. Objections are filed against applications submitted by other countries when they conflict with existing trade interests to an unreasonable extent.

Challenges

Products have to meet strict conditions to qualify for protection status. The registration procedure currently takes 2 to 5 years. The procedures may be held up by a possible conflict with commercial trademarks that have already been registered. Protection status also has certain disadvantages: to continue to meet the requirements of the product dossier, any change in the quality requirements has to be approved in Brussels. Controls cost money and make production less flexible.

Compatibility with Ministry policy

The regulations are implemented by the Agricultural Quality Act. The Department of Trade and Industry serves as a focal point and lobbyist for agribusiness.

Benefits

Regional products are protected from imitation. Protection status says something about the quality or origin of the product and appeals to quality-conscious consumers.