

SPECIFICATION

COUNCIL REGULATION (EC) No 510/2006 on protected geographical indications and protected designations of origin

“Armagh Bramley Apple”

EC No:

PDO () PGI (✓)

This summary sets out the main elements of the product specification for information purposes.

1 RESPONSIBLE DEPARTMENT IN THE MEMBER STATE

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2 GROUP

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Composition: Producers: 140

3 TYPE OF PRODUCT

Class 1.6 Fruit, vegetables and cereals fresh or processed.

4 SPECIFICATION

(Summary of requirements under Article 4(2) of Regulation (EC) No 510/2006)

4.1 Name: “Armagh Bramley Apple”

4.2 Description: Armagh Bramley Apple is the name given to Bramley apples that are grown in the defined area. The apple has the following characteristics:

- Large in size (60-120mm diameter)
- Flat sided, ribbed apex, large eye which is part opened.
- Solid green colour with reddish blush.
- Sepals are brown and downy.
- Stalk is short and thick.
- The flesh is white with a tinge of green and is firm and moist.
- Tangy flavour.
- Maintains texture and taste when cooked.
- Robust allowing for longer storability.

Geographical area:

The traditional apple growing parishes within the Archdiocese of Armagh in Northern Ireland, which covers the counties of Armagh and Tyrone and part of County Londonderry and includes the following parishes:

- Ballygawley
- Beragh
- Bessbrook
- Cloghogue
- Clonoe
- Coagh
- Coalisland
- Cookstown
- Crossmaglen
- Cullyhanna
- Donaghmore
- Dromintree
- Dungannon
- Eglisli

- Keady, Derrynose & Madden
- Kildress
- Killcluney
- Killeeshill
- Kilmore
- Lissan
- Loughgall
- Magherafelt
- Middletown
- Middle Killeavy
- Moneymore
- Moy
- Mullaghbawn
- Newbridge
- Pomeroy
- Portadown
- Tandragee
- Termonmaguirc
- Whitecross

4.3 Proof of Origin:

Growers operate a coding practice where bins of apples are labelled, when picked. This identification remains with the stock throughout the supply chain. The labels include the following information:

- Date of Harvest
- Orchard Code
- Bin Code
- Picker ID

4.5 Method of production:

Armagh Bramley Apples are grown in the highly fertile, silt-loam or clay-loam soils of the region, in fields of typical size between 1.5 hectares and 4 hectares. In all orchards, the field boundary is maintained as a substantial hedgerow and windbreak of mixed woody plant species e.g. *Alnus*, *Ilex*, *Populus*, *Crataegus*, *Betula*. This provides protection from the chill northerly or north-easterly winds which arise during some spring periods. Often, the field margin below these boundaries is deliberately left unmown, thus producing a dense understorey, which enhance the windbreak effect at lower levels.

Regardless of tree age or size, all summer and winter pruning is carried out manually. The management of these trees for consistent crop yield and quality requires those skills gained from many years' experience in shaping the frame and canopy through winter and summer pruning.

Armagh growers pride themselves on observing Good Agricultural Practice in the production of Armagh Bramley apples. Pollination by honeybees is commonly employed during the blossom period and all spray applications are undertaken with

due diligence to the welfare of these and other beneficial insects, as well as careful regard to the wider environment.

Widespread use is made of foliar nutrition in Armagh Bramley orchards; both 'straight' (single) nutrients and seaweed-derived fertiliser blends are incorporated into the regular spray programme. This approach helps to target nutrition to the specific need of the fruiting tree and tempers the application of soil-applied fertilisers.

Apples are harvested by hand between early September and late October. Time of picking is dependent on season, market, fruit maturity and tree age and rootstock type. Growers often concur on the start date for picking relevant to the size of the apples and their rate of growth during the late summer/early autumn. Most apples are harvested once they have achieved a minimum average diameter of 75mm, but before they have matured beyond the stage where >20% of the stored carbohydrate has been converted from starch to sugar. Pickers are trained in handling fruit to avoid skin marking and flesh damage, which is particularly critical for this variety, since a significant proportion of the crop is stored in controlled atmosphere conditions for supply to market throughout the year.

4.6 Link:

- **The geography, topography and climatic condition that result in an abundant growth of feedstuffs.**

The defined area is subject to climatic influences including an annual rainfall of up to 80 inches, derived from the Atlantic weather system, and an average temperature range of 3 °c (winter) to 18°c (summer) arising from the influence of the Gulf Stream.

The colder climate also accounts for the less rounded shape than other Bramleys. The cooler weather leads to uneven pollination across the ovaries of individual fruit. The ovaries that are fertilised first will swell and develop before the others, which means that the Armagh Bramley Apples develop a characteristic non-round shape.

The Armagh Bramley apple orchards are unusual in their northerly location and as a result of the climate the apples produced are fewer in number but richer in flavour. The cost of producing Bramley, as a result, is high.

The unique growing conditions in Armagh result in a firmer, more dense fruit than would be grown elsewhere. Aided by a rich, fertile soil that is high in calcium and essential nutrients with a pure and abundant water supply, County Armagh produces an apple that has no equal anywhere in the world.

The rich soil and higher precipitation also means that there is no requirement for artificial irrigation. These combine to give the Armagh Bramley apple denser texture. This texture allows the apples to be stored for longer (12-13 months) and allows them to hold their flavour and texture when cooked.

Due to the northerly location, there is less light than other Bramley growing areas and so photosynthesis dictates a lower tree density, allowing for lateral growth. The colder climate than other Bramley growing areas means that there is less uniformity of growth in the Armagh Bramley Apple and also means that there is less insect pressure and so insecticides require application once per season. This reduced insecticide application is reflected in low residue levels. The lower temperatures

mean that that there is a longer growing season. This longer growing season and cooler climate results in a larger, firmer Bramley Apples, with less uniformity of shape with a stronger distinctive flavour.

- **The long tradition and reputation**

County Armagh is known throughout Ireland as the Orchard County, with apples having grown in the county for 3000 years. St Patrick is said to have planted an apple tree at Ceangoba, an ancient settlement east of Armagh.

The Bramley apple was first brought to Armagh in 1884, when Mr Nicholson bought 60 Bramley seedlings from Henry Merryweather and introduced them to Northern Ireland. By 1921, 7000 acres had been planted and Bramley had become the principal variety in Armagh. Processing of the apple started in 1903 and Northern Ireland's leading processors are still based in County Armagh, near their main supply, the orchards of the county.

The Bramley apple has a unique texture and flavour that assures its position as the king of culinary apples. High in malic acid and low in sugar it retains its strong, tangy flavour throughout the cooking process. The Bramley apple is the only apple in the world with these properties. The Armagh Bramley Apple has a reputation for being firmer in texture, which means that they can be stored for longer and hold their texture for longer when cooking.

The reputation of Armagh as the Orchard County is solely due to the Armagh Bramley Apple. 99% of all top fruit grown in Northern Ireland is Bramley Apple, and 95% of all top fruit grown in Northern Ireland is in Armagh.

Armagh is referred to as the Orchard County throughout the culture and customs of the area, from traditional folk songs to local sporting teams.

The term 'Orchard' is synonymous with Armagh only as a result of the Armagh Bramley Apple, yet many companies in the designated area unrelated to the Bramley, use the name 'Orchard' due to the instant recognition that it gives to the area due to the importance of the Armagh Bramley Apple.

The importance of the Armagh Bramley Apple to the region is reflected not only in the fact that up to 1500 local people are employed in the industry, but also that traditional events still take place, such as Apple Week, and the Apple festival in October. The last Sunday in May is designated Apple Blossom Sunday, as the local orchards are a sea of pink and white flowers. Tourists can take tours of the orchards, complete with Armagh Bramley apple pies, washed down with Armagh cider. Local restaurants actively promote dishes made from the local Armagh apples, such as Armagh Bramley apple pie, Armagh Bramley Apple Sorbet and Armagh Bramley Apple Crumble. Armagh Bramley Recipe competitions are held with recipes for starters (e.g. Bramley Apple Soup or Ulster Delight), main courses (e.g. Pork with Bramley Apple Stuffing) and desserts (e.g. Armagh Bramley Apple Cake, Bramley Toffee Pudding, Armagh East Coast Soufflé); there is even a local potter who has a Bramley Apple Range, inspired by the nearby orchards.

There are some customs associated with the apple; A wet St Swithin's day indicates that there will be a bumper harvest, a toast is drunk to the trees under the best

bearing tree, and if there is a tree bearing both flower and fruit at the same time, it is said that there will be a death in the family before the next harvest.

4.7 Inspection body:

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4.8 Labelling:

Approved symbol will be used, including the information set out at 4.4.