

**COUNCIL REGULATION (EC) No 510/2006**

**APPLICATION TO REGISTER:**

**“WEST COUNTRY LAMB”**

**PGI (🇬🇧) PDO ( )**

**National file No:**

**1. Responsible Department in the Member State: United Kingdom**

**Name** Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs  
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**2. Group**

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**Composition:** Producers/processors

### **3. Type of Product**

**Class:** Group 1.1: Fresh Meat

### **4. SPECIFICATION**

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

#### **4.1 Name:**

West Country Lamb

#### **4.2 Description**

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, in approved abattoirs within the West Country region, or outside of the area. These approved plants will have been inspected by an independent inspector to ensure full traceability and authenticity of product. The plants will be licensed by MSW as approved to process West Country Lamb. In addition, the supply chain is assured at all stages and verified to EN45011 standard by independent inspectorates.

All livestock is reared in line with agreed, high standards of husbandry and welfare, providing assurance of its safety.

Production must meet the following minimum requirements:

- born, reared and finished within the West Country region
- fed a forage based diet
- comply with all current legislation
- possess and be aware of all relevant Codes of Practice
- ensure the health and welfare of the stock based on The Five Freedoms, that being freedom from hunger/thirst, discomfort, pain/injury/disease, pain/distress and the freedom to express normal behaviour
- ensure that full traceability systems are in place
- ensure livestock are managed by competent stockmen and trained staff
- ensure the safety and welfare of animals during transport, marketing and prior to slaughter
- slaughter occurs in an approved and licensed facility with full traceability to ensure authenticity of product

The farms and processing plants are inspected by independent inspectors with a defined inspection protocol.

To comply with the requirements of the West Country Lamb scheme, producers are required during the inspections to demonstrate the lambs are born, reared and finished within the West Country region. A feed log is required and proof provided that the lambs have been fed on a diet comprising of at least 70% forage by mass over their lifetime. The scheme requires an extensive system with a suitable period of grazing, typically two months, prior to slaughter.

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.

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<sup>th</sup> 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 (see 3.4 below) improves the chemical composition and organoleptic qualities of the meat in terms of fatty acid composition, vitamin E content and sensory quality. This is more richly flavoured, 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 O or better, with a fatness of 2 to 3H

		Increasing fatness =>						
		1	2	3L	3H	4L	4HL	5
Improving conformation ↑ ⇅ ↓	E							
	U							
	R							
	O							
	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.

#### **4.3 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.

#### **4.4 Proof of Origin:**

The supply chain is assured at all stages and verified to EN45001 standard by independent inspectorates (see 4.7 below) and national official control bodies applying specifications set by bodies that are also independent of Meat South West, which specifications have been augmented by specific requirements applicable to West Country Lamb to ensure the link between the qualities of the product and its origin. Operators throughout the supply chain are subject to verification of their activities within the production and supply of West Country Lamb to ensure that they comply with the specification and that the provenance and qualities of the lamb are guaranteed.

Production and inspection satisfies the standards recognised by the independent organisation, Assured Food Standards (AFS). Schemes applying the AFS standards are recognised by the UK government as Food Quality Schemes (i.e. they are national quality schemes that are established pursuant to Article 32 of Council Regulation (EC) No 1698/2005 and satisfy the requirements of Article 22(2) of Regulation 1974/2006). They apply from the farm to the markets, hauliers, abattoirs and processing facilities to ensure traceability, authenticity and quality of

product. Meat South West will recognise any scheme providing a similar level of assurance to ensure that equivalent standards are being met including notably guarantees of compliance with the production standards and the link to origin required by this specification.

The farms under these schemes are inspected by independent inspectors with a defined inspection protocol. AFS operates in the lamb sector by:

- Setting lamb assurance standards throughout the whole chain (farm, transport, markets and abattoirs)
- Licensing those standards to various Certification Bodies (who inspect and certify against them) and ensuring consistent delivery of assurance across all providers
- Maintaining a central database of all procedures and businesses certified against the AFS standards
- Promoting the benefits of assurance to both producers and businesses within the lamb supply chain and to external bodies
- Encouraging producers and businesses to participate in assurance by applying to a Certification Body
- Dealing with general enquiries relating to lamb assurance

It is an independent organisation set up to manage, develop and promote a consumer-facing mark (label/logo) trusted by the public, which provides assurance that food is safe, of good quality and affordable. It is an independent non-profit organisation, ensuring that it can operate objectively in the interest of the consumer, without undue influence from any organisation or link in the chain.

- It sets/recognises assurance standards that apply to various product sectors and to different links in the food supply chain.
- It manages the certification bodies that police those standards.
- It defines the usage conditions for the consumer-facing mark, i.e. it licenses the processors and packers who display it on their packs, and ultimately ensure that the mark is only seen on food that is worthy of it and properly authorised to carry it.

- It is committed to working with the entire supply chain to harmonise and strengthen the standards under a single mark.
- It is run by an independent Chairman and a Board of Directors including prominent academics and professionals representing consumers, the food production and supply chain, veterinary science, animal welfare, official control bodies and the environment.

For simplicity, the term 'MSW-approved' is used to indicate any scheme consisting of or equivalent to the AFS scheme that is recognised by Meat South West for the purposes of the production and supply of West Country Lamb.

The specific provenance of West Country Lamb is assured and identified throughout the entire supply chain from birth through to slaughter, processing and delivering the final product.

All of the sheep from which West Country Lamb is derived are born and reared in the West Country region of England, the specified geographical area. The majority of them are also slaughtered in that region. However, because of a shortage of regional abattoir capacity, animals from which West Country Lamb is to be obtained may also be slaughtered outside the region in abattoirs approved under the terms and conditions of the scheme.

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 farm where the lambs are born and reared must be accredited and inspected under a MSW-approved scheme as must any livestock market, haulier and abattoir involved in the production of West Country Lamb. The MSW-approved standards control operations on the farm, in transport, at slaughter and in further processing and supply. Animals must be transported in compliance with the Welfare of Animals (Transport) Order 2006. At the point of slaughter the haulier will be

inspected to ensure they are properly accredited. Livestock farmers must document all movements of livestock, including details of the haulier used. Within the assurance inspection the movement books will be checked and these are also checked by competent authorities including the Rural Payments Agency and Trading Standards Departments on a regular basis to ensure the legal requirements are met.

The lambs arrive at the slaughterhouse with a farmer self-declaration of ownership, including confirmation that the animals were born and reared entirely within the West Country region of England and fed on a 70% forage based diet. The lambs remain in their group and are batched together to ensure full traceability.

Once slaughtered the identification of the meat from the animal as West Country Lamb is maintained until it leaves the premises. Should that identification be lost or compromised, at this or any later stage, the meat is no longer eligible to be labelled or sold as West Country Lamb. The system requires the carcass and the cuts of the carcass to be fully traceable within the premises, in terms of the classification, weight, kill date, slaughter batch number and slaughter number within that batch, as well as carrying the abattoir identification code. This information provides a link to the origin of the meat, guaranteeing its origin in the West Country region of England.

Once the carcass/side has been chilled, it may be broken down into primals, which may be vacuum-packed in the abattoir premises or in separate cutting plants to which the labelled carcass/side has been taken in refrigerated vehicles. The carcass/side/primal is then matured if required, each being marked with individual labels clearly showing the batch number. After maturation the meat is either sold in this form or further broken down into cuts and sold pre-packed. The plants will keep records such as the farmers' details and assurance details as well as batch number and self-declaration forms for auditing purposes. In all cases, the meat is clearly labelled as West Country Lamb from a specific batch.

The origin and identity of the lamb as West Country Lamb is thus guaranteed at the point of delivery to a wholesaler, and thereafter to the consumer via retail or food service operators.

#### **4.5 Method of Production:**

The sheep used in the production of West Country Lamb must be no more than 12 months old at the time of slaughter.

Where animals are (i) born before 1st October in any year and (ii) slaughtered between the 1st January and 30<sup>th</sup> April in the following year, a process step will be undertaken to ensure quality. This process will be either High Voltage Electrical Stimulation (HVES), hip suspension or maturation for a period of 5 days at refrigerated temperatures.

During maturation the natural enzymes within the meat break down the muscle tissues and thus improve the tenderness and eating quality of the meat. If high voltage electrical stimulation is used, then the maturation time can be reduced accordingly as this method reduces the risk of cold shortening and accelerates tenderisation. Records are kept to show temperatures, processes and times to ensure the carcasses are cooled and matured correctly. West Country Lamb benefits from optimum conditioning procedures in terms of temperature and length of time of conditioning, ensuring the flavour and texture are also optimised. This strengthens the effect of the organoleptic and other qualities linked to the production of the sheep in the West Country of England.

##### **1) On the Farm**

The sheep must be born and raised entirely on farms within the West Country region of England. They are fed on a 70% forage based diet to ensure good flavour in the meat. This feeding system is universally used in the production of the sheep from which West Country Lamb is obtained.

An intensive feeding system is not used and animals are not fed on waste products.

- The livestock are out to grass during the summer. Summer grazing takes place traditionally from April through to December. However this is dependent



on the seasons to ensure welfare is not compromised. Therefore if weather conditions determine early housing or late turn-out this is acceptable providing the diet still comprises of a minimum of 70% forage.

- During the winter months some stock are out-wintered on silage or hay, or other types of forage such as fodder beet or kale. Many animals, due to the high rainfall and soil structure in some areas, are housed and fed mainly on silage or hay.
- Animals, when finishing or at weaning, may be fed supplement feed, in which case, the details of the ingredients and purchase are recorded by the farmer and checked by the assurance inspectors. The time the animal is supplemented is determined taking into account factors such as animal welfare and marketing. The maximum amount of supplementary feed is 30%, with forage at 70%. The supplementary feeding would be when required, such as during winter months or the weaning and finishing periods. The time of feeding is not determined within the specification, bar the maximum amount, and is governed by marketing and welfare factors. This means that supplementary feed is provided at the finishing stage because forage alone is rarely sufficient in order to ensure that the animals meet their optimum market requirements. To ensure welfare is not compromised means supplementary feed is provided when forage is in poor supply or of poor quality, such as in winter periods or extremes, such as drought or flooding.

The farmer will complete a self-declaration that will be presented on arrival at the abattoir and retained there stating the protocol has been adhered to.

The length of the finishing period is not critical to the production of West Country Lamb. The finished weight must be between 9 kg and 26 kg dead weight. The farmer or processor determines when the animal is deemed fit for slaughter by either visual or physical assessment. The animal is assessed on conformation and fat level and when the farmer believes this to be at the optimum the animal is slaughtered.

## 2) **From Farm to Abattoir**

Once the animals have been selected and are ready for slaughter they are transported to the abattoir directly or via MSW-approved livestock auction markets, by the farmer or a hired haulier in a trailer or lorry. All hauliers will operate under an MSW-approved assurance scheme. Farmers who deliver their own stock will adhere to the MSW-approved standards within their farm assurance scheme.

## 3) **At the Abattoir**

Predominantly animals will be slaughtered in the West Country region but producers can use MSW-approved abattoirs outside of the region. All abattoirs follow a clear protocol within the MSW-approved scheme stating how stock are to be treated and how the carcasses are to be treated.

The abattoirs keep records of the animals they receive, the farmers' self-declaration and hauliers' details to facilitate traceability.

Only carcasses that are classified in accordance with the EUROP classification scheme (or equivalent) as R and above (or O in the case of carcasses weighing less than 15 kg) and of fat levels 2 to 3H will be used for the production of West Country Lamb. The slaughter number, date of slaughter, classification details and cold carcass weight is recorded and attached on a label to the carcass to ensure traceability.

The meat, where applicable, will receive a minimum of 5 days' conditioning at refrigerated temperatures, a process known as maturation. During maturation the natural enzymes within the meat break down the muscle tissues and thus improve the tenderness and eating quality of the meat. If high or low voltage electrical stimulation are used, then the conditioning time can be reduced accordingly as these methods reduce the risk of cold shortening and accelerate tenderisation. Records are kept to show temperatures, processes and times to ensure the carcasses are cooled and matured correctly. West Country Lamb benefits from optimum conditioning procedures in terms of temperature and length of time of conditioning, ensuring the flavour and texture are also optimised. This strengthens

the effect of the organoleptic and other qualities linked to the production of the sheep in the West Country of England

#### **4) At Cutting Plants**

Traceability at batch level will be maintained through the cutting plant.

The lamb is normally presented to the cutting room as either a whole carcass or side. The batch system is retained throughout the cutting room. Within the cutting room the lamb is divided into smaller cuts to suit the market requirements, and can be bone-in or boneless. The cutting facilities may not adjoin the slaughtering facilities, in which case the meat is transported hygienically to the cutting premises, identification as West Country Lamb being maintained. All carcasses are broken down into at least primals for retailing. All meat is transported in refrigerated vehicles.

#### **5) At point of sale**

Consumers purchase lamb in a range of traditional cuts prepared to meet their individual requirements. West Country Lamb can be sold either in frozen or fresh form, either pre-packed or in service counters. The meat is described either by traditional cut names or cooking methods.

West Country Lamb may be used as the name of lamb or of the lamb ingredient of a lamb product at retail or in food service provided that all the lamb so named is West Country Lamb and the term is not used and the product is not advertised, labelled or presented inaccurately or misleadingly.

### **4.6 Link**

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. Meat South West estimates the total contribution of the red meat sector to the West Country economy at £3 billion per annum and 28,000 jobs. The

continuation of livestock production is essential if the region's environment and heritage are to be protected. Indeed it is that special environment that is the basis for the characteristics that are inherently developed in West Country Lamb as a consequence of the source animals being raised 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.

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. As a result, sheep produced in the West Country have a greater access to grass and grass products than those in most other parts of Britain or elsewhere in the Community. Grass, whether fresh or conserved, is a source of  $\alpha$ -linolenic acid, 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. There is therefore 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.

The West Country of England is properly describable 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.

Grass growth is affected by soil type, temperature, rainfall and sunshine. A further important factor is topography ie 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.

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. Those fed grass silage had higher levels of fat in muscle and the fatty acid profile was quite different. 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 EPA and DHA, all n-3 (omega-3) fatty acids, were higher in muscle of the lambs fed grass silage. The ratio of all n-6 fatty acids to all n-3 fatty acids was significantly higher in the animals fed concentrate. The recommended ratio for the human diet is 4 or below and the grass-fed lamb was more acceptable in nutritional terms.

Thus, grass and grass forage diets demonstrably produce a distinctive fatty acid profile in muscle that distinguishes them from concentrate diets. Values of >1.5% linolenic acid, > 0.8% EPA and > 0.3% DHA are said to be descriptive of grass-reared lamb. 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 four times 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 concluded that the taste of lamb is better in grass-finished sheep than grain-fed ones. The score for lamb flavour was almost doubled with grass compared to concentrate. The score for abnormal flavour was much lower with grass feeding.

The independent report commissioned by Meat South West from which the above conclusions were extracted (see Appendix) shows the special characteristics to be high concentrations of n-3 fatty acids and vitamin E.

- Linolenic acid > 1.5% loin muscle fatty acids in lamb
- EPA > 0.8% loin muscle fatty acids in lamb
- DHA > 0.3% loin muscle fatty acids in lamb
- Vitamin E > 3.5 µg/g loin muscle in lamb

These values are achieved in lamb which is born, reared and finished in the West Country of England where animals have access to fresh grass for longer than in other regions because of the warm wet climate and where production systems are based on extensive production from grass. Climate changes in the future are likely to favour grass farming in the West Country even more than at present.

The report concludes that these scientific points should be added to a common perception in Britain that the West Country of England produces high quality lamb because of its green image linked to the grassland landscape.

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

The Polled Dorset and Dorset Horn breeds of sheep are used by many farmers because of their natural, frequent breeding characteristic. This allows them to lamb in the autumn and have lambs ready to market from late January onwards. Other lowland flocks lamb in January and February, and farmers on the upland areas of Bodmin Moor, Dartmoor and Exmoor lamb in April and May, thus providing natural year-round production and supply of lambs.

### **History of Meat Production in the Region**

Historically the West Country has been a pastoral region, important as a supplier of meat to London and other large conurbations, and also to ships calling at important West Country ports such as Plymouth and Bristol. The Crown victuallers in Elizabeth I's reign regarded Somerset as "*the producer of beef and mutton for the larder*". In 1935 Hogg indicates that mutton from North Devon, where sheep were kept in large numbers, was supplied to Smithfield through 'dealer-slaughtermen' who had slaughterhouses at most railway stations between Barnstaple & Exeter and Holsworthy & Exeter.

Sheep that roam the West Country region of England today are often descended from sheep that were to be found in the region centuries ago (eg Exmoor Horn sheep). Others have been introduced more recently (eg the Devon Closewool, the oldest registered flock being 110 years old), on the basis of particularly good performance in the climate and topography that characterises this naturally- fortunate geographical area. Such persistence and excellence is typical of West Country livestock farming.

Sheep have grazed on Exmoor for over 3,000 years. Similarly, Dartmoor sheep were there in prehistoric times, possibly derived from Iron Age Soay ancestors. In 1190, King Richard the Lionheart gave a charter to Buckfast Abbey permitting the monks to pasture their sheep, and this continued for centuries, although the site is now beneath a reservoir. The tradition of keeping sheep on the moors and on the lowlands of the West Country region of England can be traced continuously back to times long past, and the farmers of today still employ procedures based upon the traditional practices.

Such appreciation of the importance of lamb from the West Country of England remains as true today in relation to West Country Lamb. A number of major retailers recognise the quality of the lamb from the region and the positive association consumers make with the patchwork of small fields with grazing livestock in the labelling they apply to the lamb they sell. Similarly, many small retailers, restaurateurs and other catering businesses label their lamb as West Country Lamb, and will benefit from being able to apply the 'PGI Seal' to the lamb they supply.

#### **4.7 Inspection body:**

The following bodies are currently recognised by AFS for the purpose of verifying compliance with the specification:

1. PAI Ltd

Lesley Hemson, Food Sector Manager - PAI Ltd

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2. Integra Ltd on behalf of NSF Certification

David Hope, Technical Operations Manager

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3. SAI Global

Kerry Futter, Senior Sales Executive, UK Assurance Services

SAI Global UK Assurance Services Ltd, PO Box 6236, Milton Keynes MK1 9ES

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**These inspection bodies conform to the principles of the EN 45011 standard.**