

20 Sidmouth Avenue
Newcastle
ST5 0QN

Telephone: [REDACTED]

Facsimile: (01782) 297010

E-mail: [REDACTED]@staffordshire.gov.uk

Website: www.staffordshire.gov.uk

Please ask for [REDACTED]

For hearing impaired callers only, please call
Minicom (01785) 854156

In 2006/07 4,934 Staffordshire businesses
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24/4/08

Dear [REDACTED]

Staffordshire Cheese Protected Designation of Origin (PDO)

I refer to my letter of 3 January 2008 which outlined the current position re the PDO specification 005/0354 for Staffordshire Cheese.

The possible options for the continued co-existence on the market of the registered PDO name "Staffordshire Cheese", and the term "Staffordshire Organic Cheese" have now been discussed with Defra.

You may already have considered the options. Due to the very distinct sourcing and processing procedures employed by the current producers of the two cheeses, it seems to Defra and Staffordshire Trading Standards Department that it would be difficult to amend the current specification to successfully incorporate both operations. In our view, only if the sourcing and method of production obstacles could be overcome would this be a realistic option but it may raise objections from interested parties. Secondly, the name of the PDO could possibly be amended to cover a smaller area e.g. "Staffordshire Moorlands", but this may in practice be too restrictive on both the current and potential future producers and again, may give rise to objections. Nevertheless, you may wish to investigate these options and take advice on them.

It seems to us, however, that the most expedient and equitable solution would be to insert an additional paragraph into the labelling section of the registered PDO specification for Staffordshire Cheese which would clarify the status of Staffordshire Organic Cheese. Although the exact wording of the paragraph can be discussed, it is important that certain key elements are included. Following the model adopted in a similar situation relating to "Scottish Farmed Salmon" (OJ C 246, 14.10.2003, p.4), a paragraph along the following lines could be inserted into the labelling section of the specification:

"The applicant declares that the protection of the name "Staffordshire Cheese" is without prejudice to the continued use of the term "Staffordshire Organic Cheese" provided that the latter is produced in Staffordshire and that the use of that term in the labelling is made in such a way as to avoid misleading consumers in relation to the Protected Designation of Origin, i.e. no change in the word order of the Staffordshire Organic Cheese".

We would expect this to have the effect of allowing for the co-existence of Staffordshire Organic Cheese and thereby avoiding enforcement problems, whilst still protecting the Staffordshire Cheese PDO, although it does not offer any protection to the Staffordshire Organic Cheese under the PDO/PGI regime as such.

All the options mentioned would involve a similar procedure to that involved for the original PDO application itself (i.e. a consultation procedure at national level with current and potential producers and other interested parties, followed by scrutiny by the European Commission, publication in the Official Journal for the objection procedure before a final decision is reached and published).

If there is agreement in principle that the paragraph insertion is the way forward we suggest a further meeting for the parties to consider the precise wording of the new paragraph and clarify next steps.

It would be appreciated if you could contact me to arrange a mutually convenient date and time to discuss this matter further.

I am addressing an identically worded letter to [REDACTED]

If you require any further information do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]