

SPECIFICATION

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

“Pembrokeshire Earlies” / “Pembrokeshire Early Potatoes”

EC No:

PDO () PGI (X)

1 COMPETENT AUTHORITY

NAME: G.I. TEAM, DEPARTMENT FOR THE ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

ADDRESS: DEFRA

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2ND FLOOR

SEACOLE BUILDING

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TELEPHONE:

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2 GROUP

Name: Puffin Produce Ltd

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Pembrokeshire

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Composition: Producers/processors (25 approx) Other (none)

3 TYPE OF PRODUCT

Class 1.6 – Fruit, vegetables and cereals fresh/processed

4 SPECIFICATION

4.1 Name:

“Pembrokeshire Earlies”/“Pembrokeshire Early Potatoes”

4.2 Description:

Pembrokeshire Earlies/Pembrokeshire Early Potatoes is the name given to immature potatoes of the *solanum tuberosum* species of the Solanaceae family.

The potato has the following characteristics:

It is small in size, 15 – 70mm diameter, due to the young age of the potatoes when harvested. The potato is round or oval in shape with a soft skin and distinctive strong earthy nutty flavour and aroma. It has a creamy texture and white to a light yellow colour which is consistent throughout the potato.

Pembrokeshire Earlies/Pembrokeshire Early Potatoes are grown from the basic seed varieties catalogued in the national registers of varieties. Pembrokeshire Earlies/Pembrokeshire Early Potatoes are sold to supermarkets and potato wholesalers throughout the UK. The potatoes are sold either loose or in trays/bags of various weights according to customer requirements. The first crop is sold with the soil still on in order to protect the soft skin of the potatoes. As the season progresses the potato skin hardens sufficiently to allow washing. Pembrokeshire Earlies/Pembrokeshire Early Potatoes are usually harvested from beginning of May until the end of July subject to weather conditions. Potatoes harvested after this period are called main crop potatoes.

Pembrokeshire Earlies/Pembrokeshire Early Potatoes must be planted, grown and harvested in the defined area and within the required timescale.

4.3 Geographical area:

The County of Pembrokeshire in West Wales.

4.4 Proof of origin:

From seed

Pembrokeshire Earlies/Pembrokeshire Early Potatoes are grown from seed purchased from aphid free certified sources , from seed registered by the Seed Potato Classification Scheme or equivalent. The quality of the seed is assured by The Red Tractor Assurance Safe Haven Certification Scheme or equivalent. Seed potatoes maintain full traceability from their source to their arrival on farm and traceability is maintained throughout the growing, harvesting, processing and sale of the potatoes ensuring complete full traceability from “field to fork” as referenced below.

On farm

At harvest, before the potatoes leave the farm, each batch of potatoes, is allocated a unique code which is traceable; it makes reference to the date and field of harvest and the name of the Pembrokeshire farm from which it came. This information is available to processors.

Post farm packaging and distribution

Pembrokeshire Earlies/Pembrokeshire Early Potatoes are sold to supermarkets and potato wholesalers throughout the UK. The potatoes are sold either loose or in trays/bags of various weights according to customer requirements.

If further processing occurs, e.g. if potatoes from a 1 tonne box are washed and put into the smaller packs of the weights mentioned above, each batch will be allocated a separate number which is traceable to the field and grower.

Post farm assurance, including traceability is in line with the British Retail Consortium Global Standard for Food Safety, or equivalent. This system is required to identify and trace product lots throughout all stages of processing and distribution to market. The system ensures that produce supplied to customers are adequately labelled or identified to facilitate traceability.

The system used is capable of linking raw material lot codes through to finished product codes. This enables the finished product to be identified should the recall of a particular batch of raw material need to be instigated. The traceability system covers primary packaging (in direct contact with food), and processing aids. The system

provides traceability “forwards” and “backwards” in both directions and the complete traceability system is tested at least annually.

4.5 Method of production:

The growing of Pembrokeshire Earlies/Pembrokeshire Early Potatoes has two pre planting elements:

Preparing the soil and preparing the seed.

Soil Preparation

From autumn onwards, soil preparation begins with ploughing. The field is then left to weather, to allow the upturned soil to breakdown.

Although large stones may be removed to minimise tuber damage, smaller stones are retained to assist in the warming of the soil.

When soil temperatures are above 0 degrees C and moisture levels allow the soil to be friable enough for cultivation. This is usually in the last two weeks of February, (but can be as early as January on coastal frost free land), the soil is tilled followed by destoning to further break it down, making it as fine and free draining as possible. The soil is then ready for planting.

Seed preparation

Pembrokeshire Earlies/Pembrokeshire Early Potatoes are grown from seed registered with the Seed Classification Scheme or equivalent. If chitting is required, then they are stored in chitting houses or sheds with transparent sides to allow light onto the seed to encourage sprouting a process known as ‘physiological ageing’ During this process the seed potatoes are placed in single layered trays to enable light to reach each individual seed potato.

The chitting house is well ventilated to minimise the risk of disease, condensation and help prevent the temperature in the chitting house rising above 15 degrees C. During cold weather the vents are closed and heat is applied via gas or diesel fuelled space heaters as required, to keep ambient air temperature in the chitting house above 1 degrees C. By mid February after successful chitting seed potatoes will have a strong sprout of about 25mm.

Planting

The soil is pushed up into shallow drills and the potatoes are planted by hand or by machine.

To achieve quick growth, the seed is planted under approximately 75mm of soil; with the same amount of soil underneath. These shallow drills enable quicker heating of the soil and allow swift emergence. The small size of Pembrokeshire Earlies/Pembrokeshire Early Potatoes at harvest, require shallow drills.

Post planting management

Following plant emergence, the crop will be sprayed approximately every ten days to prevent potato blight. Due to the shallow drills, the plants are susceptible to drying out so close attention is paid to soil moisture levels and irrigation may be applied if available.

Harvesting

Following test digs, harvesting usually occurs from the beginning of May until the end of July, subject to weather conditions.

Initially, the “green tops” of the plants are cut off with a mechanical topper. The crop is either lifted out of the ground by mechanical lifters and picked by hand, or harvested by machine with built in lifting equipment.

Hand picking may be necessary when growing Pembrokeshire Earlies/Pembrokeshire Early Potatoes on steep sloping land, and during the first two weeks of the harvest when the skin of the potatoes are very soft. Hand picking allows the potatoes to be harvested with minimal damage to the crop. As the season progresses, the skin of the potatoes harden sufficiently to allow careful machine harvesting. The young and soft nature of the potatoes means that machine harvesting must always be carried out with great care.

Pembrokeshire Earlies/Pembrokeshire Early Potatoes are sold into supermarkets and to potato wholesalers throughout the UK. The potatoes are sold either loose or in

trays/bags of various weights according to customer requirements. Pembrokeshire Earlies/Pembrokeshire Early potatoes are brought to market as quickly as possible in order to provide the freshest product possible.

4.6 Link:

It is the mild climate of Pembrokeshire which enables Pembrokeshire Earlies/Pembrokeshire Early Potatoes to be grown and harvested early in the year, their short growing time and freshness producing a distinctive taste which has historically, and is currently, in strong demand. Pembrokeshire has the earliest and longest growing season in Wales.

Pembrokeshire Earlies/Pembrokeshire Early Potatoes require warmth to ensure successful growth. Being situated in the westernmost point of Wales, on the west coast of the UK and being surrounded by the sea on three sides, Pembrokeshire is in a unique position to benefit from the warmth generated by the sea which is warmed by the North Atlantic Drift of The Gulf Stream. The Gulf Stream is a powerful, warm, and swift Atlantic ocean current that originates at the tip of Florida. The current helps keep the western coast of Great Britain a couple of degrees warmer than the eastern side. As such, Pembrokeshire has a more equitable and milder climate than inland areas due to the sea having a cooling effect in summer and a warmer tendency in winter relative to the interior. The warming effect of the sea on the county helps the soil to warm earlier than other parts of the UK, facilitating growth. It also minimises the risk of frosts damaging the emerged crop. Pembrokeshire has the earliest growing season in Wales. The equitability of the climate is hugely beneficial to plant growth.

Dr Brian John notes in his book, *The Geology of Pembrokeshire*.

“.....The soils of Pembrokeshire are famous for their crops of early potatoes, particularly close to the coast.....”

.....The main distinguishing characteristic of the geology of Pembrokeshire is that it is made up of immensely old rocks. Most of the rocks of which the county is composed are more than 280 million years old, with no young rock, such as those seen in England, represented at all. The rocks of the North of the county are Pre-Cambrian and Lower Palaeozoic (that is, more than 295 million years old), whereas the South of the county is made up rocks of the Upper Palaeozoic age (that is, less than 395 million years old but no more than 225 million years old).....”

These ancient rocks and the distinct soils they generate help contribute to the uniqueness of Pembrokeshire Earlies/Pembrokeshire Early Potatoes. Most Pembrokeshire Earlies/Pembrokeshire Early Potatoes are grown in Red Sandstone soils on south facing land close to the coast. This land is inherently fertile, free working and free draining. The soils dry quickly and are also quick to warm up in the spring and Pembrokeshire has a lower risk of frost than elsewhere in inland Wales.

There are numerous references that illustrate the historical importance of potatoes being grown in Pembrokeshire and Pembrokeshire Earlies/Pembrokeshire Early Potatoes being associated with the county.

Redcliffe Salaman notes in his book *The History and Social Influence of the Potato*, that Arthur Young visited Pembrokeshire in 1776 and on landing at Milford Haven he found that potato cultivation was widespread. In addition in *Early Potatoes* by W.L Thomas and P.W. Eyre; the growing of Pembrokeshire Earlies/Pembrokeshire Early Potatoes on a field scale began in 1922.

The Second World War, and the consequential market and political pressures resulted in an increase in the acreage of potatoes being grown in Pembrokeshire, the majority being sold to markets in the large population centres of South Wales and the Midlands.

The period between the 1950's and 70s saw an increase in the growing of the early potato sector, with Pembrokeshire farmers selling the majority of early potatoes to markets in the Midlands and North of England to meet growing consumer demand.

In the early 1980s, 30 growers came together to form a Potato Marketing Group which ensured that only potatoes of sufficient quality were supplied to market. Later in 1995, a processing plant was constructed in Pembrokeshire which started to grade and process potatoes for the multiple markets.

All the growers of Pembrokeshire Earlies/Pembrokeshire Early Potatoes have innate knowledge of local characteristics. Growers have to know when to plant to maximise yields. Factors they have to consider include soil temperature, soil condition, weather factors and a "feel" and understanding of when all of these things come together to mark a good time to plant. These are particular skills associated with growing Pembrokeshire Earlies/Pembrokeshire Early Potatoes, which are specific to the area and to the crop and have been developed over the years and handed down from generation to generation. Soil preparation is paramount, with smaller stones being left

in the soil to aid warming. The timing of getting chitted potatoes at the optimum stage of development in time for planting is hugely important. As referenced in section 4.5. hand picking may be necessary when growing Pembrokeshire Earlies/Pembrokeshire Early Potatoes on steep sloping land and during the first two weeks of the harvest when the potatoes are very soft. Hand picking allows the potatoes to be harvested with minimal damage to the crop. As the season progresses, the potatoes harden sufficiently to allow careful machine harvesting. The young and soft nature of the potatoes means that machine harvesting has to be carried out with great care.

Pembrokeshire Earlies/Pembrokeshire Early Potatoes are well established and highly recognised by the food industry. As a quality product they are used by many top chefs and gastronomes and regularly appear as a named ingredient on their menus. Many renowned restaurateurs and agri-food businesses have demonstrated their preference for these potatoes.

Here are comments recognising the taste of Pembrokeshire Earlies/Pembrokeshire Early Potatoes.

Simon Wright – restaurateur and broadcaster describes the taste of Pembrokeshire Earlies/Pembrokeshire Early Potatoes as being *"sweet, nutty, very full flavoured with a distinctive character, flavour and identity"*

Owen Hall, Chef at The Wolfscastle Hotel says that he likes Pembrokeshire Earlies/Pembrokeshire Early Potatoes *"..in my opinion Pembrokeshire Earlies have a unique flavour due to the rich soil in Pembrokeshire.."*

In 2009 Pembrokeshire Earlies/Pembrokeshire Early Potatoes won several True Taste Awards.

4.7 Inspection body:

Name: The City & County of Swansea

Address: Trading Standards Division, The Guildhall, Swansea, SA1 4PE

Telephone: +44 (0) 1792 635600

Fax:

Email: Trading.standards@swansea.gov.uk

Other inspection bodies and Trading Standards Divisions from other areas can be used as long as the inspection body conforms to the principles of ISO 17065 standard.

4.8 Labelling:

N/A