

**SPECIFICATIONS OF
THE PROTECTED GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATION
"LECHAZO DE CASTILLA Y LEÓN"**

A) PRODUCT NAME

"LECHAZO DE CASTILLA Y LEÓN" (Suckling Lamb from Castile and Leon)

B) DESCRIPTION

The product is the offspring of sheep, whether male or female, born and reared in the territory of the Autonomous Community of Castile and Leon, of the Churra, Castellana or Ojalada breeds, or crosses between said breeds, which have been fed exclusively on mother's milk.

The word "lechazo" (suckling lamb) is a local term, with its origin in the Spanish word "leche" (milk) and defines a male or female sheep offspring fed on mother's milk.

The Protected Geographical Indication "Lechazo de Castilla y León" covers carcasses which meet the following characteristics:

- Carcass weight: between 4.5 and 7 kilos. If the suckling lamb is presented with head and pluck, the carcass weight shall be increased by 1 kg.
- Carcass classification: Category A, first quality, according to the current European Regulations for the Classification of Sheep Carcasses.
- Presentation: Carcass with head and pluck, carcass without head and pluck, half carcass and primary cuts.
- Conformation: Rectilinear profile with subconvex tendency, harmonious proportions and slightly rounded contours.
- Fat characteristics: External fat, waxy white in colour. The omentum covers the carcass. Kidneys shall appear with a layer of fat over at least half of their surface.
- Meat colour: Pearly white or pale pink.
- Meat characteristics: Very tender meat, with little intramuscular fat infiltration, great juiciness and a very smooth texture.

C) GEOGRAPHICAL AREA

The geographical area of production, slaughter and processing of suckling lambs concerned covers the entire Autonomous Community of Castile and Leon.

D) PROOF OF ORIGIN

Suckling lambs covered by the Protected Geographical Indication may only be produced by sheep farms included on the corresponding official register, as long as they can guarantee the purity of their animals' breed.

Sheep farms shall be located within the demarcated area and suckling lambs must be born and reared in said farms and may only be fed on their mother's milk.

Suckling lambs must be identified before they leave the farm according to that established by applicable legislation, including the PGI logo.

Suckling lambs must be transported to slaughter in duly authorised vehicles and accompanied by their supporting documents.

The slaughter, processing, cutting, packaging and distribution of protected meat must take place exclusively on the premises of the operators listed in the registers of the inspection body.

Products shipped for consumption must be identified at all times, with correspondence ensured between physical documents, labels and other control elements. Identification shall be carried out in the slaughterhouse.

Meat covered by the Protected Geographical Indication shall only be shipped by registered operators in such a way as to avoid impairing its quality or harming the reputation of the Protected Geographical Indication.

All operators must be able to determine:

- a) The provider, quantity and origin of all batches of suckling lambs received.
- b) The recipient, quantity and destination of labelled suckling-lamb carcasses.
- c) The correlations between each batch of living suckling lambs referred to in letter a) and each batch of labelled suckling-lamb carcasses referred to in letter b).

The production, transport, slaughter and processing of suckling lambs and the classification of carcasses shall be subject to control.

Control of the organoleptic characteristics of the meat shall be carried out via analysis in a laboratory with the experience, equipment, infrastructure and staff to carry out said tasks.

E) METHOD OF PRODUCTION

Suckling lambs must be born and reared in registered sheep farms, and may not leave said farms until they are placed on the market.

Suckling lambs must be fed exclusively on mother's milk.

The period during which the suckling lambs are transported to the slaughterhouse must be in accordance with the provisions of the legislation in force or the rules replacing said legislation.

If PGI and non-PGI sheep are present in a single pick-up area, they must be transported so as to avoid any confusion.

All covered animals must be slaughtered within the time period established by applicable legislation and separately from the rest.

The slaughter, processing and/or cutting of the animals shall be carried out in facilities duly included for said purposes in the corresponding registers.

Where appropriate, the head must be cut off at the occipito-atloid joint.

After slaughter, carcasses must be refrigerated in the slaughterhouse. Carcasses shall be refrigerated at a temperature of between 1° and 7°C, until they are placed on the market.

According to these specifications, the meat may be marketed for a maximum of eight days after slaughter. If the meat is marketed packaged or preserved in conditions that prolong its shelf life,

the marketing period may be longer, provided that the characteristics described in the Product Description section are preserved.

F) LINK

a) Historic:

The Churra, Castellana and Ojalada breeds have an eventful history, and though they were overshadowed for many years by the dominance of the Merino breed, they have always enjoyed high economic significance on the farms of Castilla La Vieja, with a great symbiosis between these livestock and agriculture; the former served to fertilise the ground and, in return, received the benefit of the farm's by-products.

During the 16th century, the region's wool and textile industry enjoyed its golden age, with the economic capital moving to Seville at the end of that century, resulting in the economic decline of the Meseta. This decline of the textile industry originally coincided with the end of the Merino livestock's hegemony, mainly oriented towards the wool industry, and the preponderance of livestock farming over agriculture, with the Association of the Honourable Council of the Mesta representing the economic power and a real pressure group for the Crown of Castile.

The decadence of livestock farming then followed, in particular after the abolition of the Mesta in 1837 and the disentailment processes. The region then moved to cereal farming, abandoning its livestock-farming speciality for agriculture.

As such, from the 19th century onwards, sheep farming has coexisted with cereal agriculture, in a relationship of equality, with the latter not predominating as the practice of transhumance gradually disappeared.

b) Natural:

- Orography.

Topography and altitude are one of the most outstanding features of Castile and Leon, and are clearly a determining factor in the ecological conditions of the region; topography is the backbone of the physical environment.

Of the total surface area of Castile and Leon – 94,147 km – 66.5% is located at an altitude of between 601 and 1,000 metres above sea level. This flat and elevated area lies in the centre and interior of the community (average altitude: 900 metres).

This topographical architecture and framework has been compared to the image of a walled castle, defended by moats. The courtyard and interiors would correspond to the sedimentary plains, with their banks, countrysides, crests and hillocks, slopes and moors; the surrounding mountain ridges serving as the crenellated walls, towers and ramparts (Cantabrian, Iberian, Central and the Galician-Leon mountains); and the moats and external areas corresponding to the depressions, pits and deep river cuts, like those carved out by the river Duero in the southwest, forging the border with Portugal.

It is therefore very interesting to note that the livestock covered by this PGI behaves on the geography like an oil slick spreading from the centre, the province of Valladolid, towards the periphery, leaving no breaks yet losing intensity as it advances, until it sets its limits, coinciding with the areas of greatest altitude (only mountains).

– Climate:

The climate of Castile and Leon is characterised by its harsh and long winter period, during which there are abundant and prolonged fogs, as well as early and late frosts. Summers are short and irregular, combining hot and dry periods with cold ones; a low precipitation index across most of the plains; an accentuated difference between the relative uniformity of the plains and the sharp climatic contrasts of the mountains.

- Flora:

Topography and climate dictate the development of the agricultural sector, both in regard to production constraints and production potential.

Thermal variables limit the choice to crops with low thermal requirements (cereal, corn, sunflower, rainfed alfalfa, etc.) and the summer water deficit, due to the decrease in precipitation during these months, results in a dependency on irrigation.

As such, in many areas, the cultivation of cereals is the only productive response farmers can offer faced with the handicaps of the region. It is for this reason that the cliché of Castile and Leon as having an agricultural production based on a cereal monoculture exists.

As such, the good sheep meat and its particular taste and flavour has always been associated with its diet based on stubble and natural pastures; for this reason, although it is a livestock product, it has always been considered a quality natural product as it is directly associated, through its diet, with the land. This pairing of sheep with cereal-cultivating zones and natural dry-land pastures is the blueprint that brings together and links an end product with the roots of its geography.

c) Production and processing systems:

– Production:

In general terms, it can be said that sheep production in Castile and Leon is currently based on extensive and semi-intensive production systems.

On the other hand, with regard to the ewe's productive characteristics, they seem well-adapted to farming systems, with a continuous or three to six lambing seasons per year, ensuring flock management to obtain three lambings in two years. In these conditions, rams remain with the ewes all year round or are introduced to the flock every two to four months, meaning that lambing seasons take place one after the other (4 months) in order to maintain monthly income from milk and lamb sales, as well as to attempt to distribute the number of ewes being milked throughout the year. In practice, however, the most frequent birth months correspond to autumn and winter, and as such, together with the availability of fodder, milk supply tends to be higher in spring and early summer.

As soon as the lamb is born, its maternity is identified and it is provisionally tagged. The free end of the umbilical cord is cut off after a knot is tightly made against the stomach and disinfected.

Feeding is the basis for growth. Suckling lambs exclusively consume their mother's milk – sometimes having two mothers, referred to as "dos madres" or "pilones" (two "mothers" or "piles").

The breeds suitable for meat production include:

The Castellana breed: described as well-proportioned, with a straight, subconvex and medium-sized profile, and a strong and harmonious appearance. Medium-large, elongated and slightly flat

head, with no wool and with thin skin, medium-sized neck, deep and well-proportioned trunk and strong limbs. Highly suitable for meat and milk production.

The Churra breed: medium-size animals with a straight or subconvex profile and elongated proportions. The head is average sized, in harmony with the volume of the body, with a long, slender neck, long, deep trunk and well-plumbed, slender and lean limbs. Suitable for meat and milk production.

The Ojalada breed: rustic and primitive, straight profile, small size. With a small head, broad forehead, long, narrow face, and a long and cylindrical neck. The trunk may be light, narrow and flattened, with high, strong and perfectly plumb limbs. This breed is used for meat production on permanent pasture.

G) CONTROL STRUCTURE

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The Agrarian Technological Institute of Castile and Leon, through the Subdirectorate for Food Quality and Promotion, is the competent authority carrying out the functions of verifying compliance with the specifications, as well as the application of sanctions provided for in Agrarian Law 1/2014 of 19 March, of Castile and Leon.

H) LABELLING

All carcasses and/or packaging in which "Lechazo de Castilla y León" meat is shipped in for packaging must come with a physical guarantee support indicating, at least, the denomination logo, date of slaughter and ID number, placed so as to not allow any second use. Suckling lambs may not be marketed as such if this requirement is not met.

The denomination logo is:

