Publication of an application for registration pursuant to Article 8(2) of Council Regulation (EC) No 509/2006 on agricultural products and foodstuffs as traditional specialities guaranteed

(2012/C 239/05)

This publication confers the right to object to the application pursuant to Article 9 of Council Regulation (EC) No 509/2006 ([1]). Statements of objection must reach the Commission within six months of the date of this publication.

APPLICATION FOR REGISTRATION OF A TSG

COUNCIL REGULATION (EC) No 509/2006

'MOULES DE BOUCHOT'

EC No: FR-TSG-0007-0048-28.12.2006

1. **Name and address of the applicant group:**

Name: Groupement des mytiliculteurs sur bouchots (GMB)
Address: 122 rue de Javel
75015 Paris
FRANCE

Tel. +33 112974844
Fax —
E-mail: gmb@cnc-france.com

2. **Member State or Third Country:**

France

3. **Product specification:**

3.1. *Name(s) to be registered:*

'Moules de bouchot'

The application concerns the name 'Moules de bouchot' in French only.

When the product is marketed, it is possible to add an additional sentence — to be translated into the other official languages of the European Union — to the effect that it has been 'produced in accordance with French tradition'.

3.2. *The name:*

☐ is specific in itself

☒ expresses the specific character of the agricultural product or foodstuff

Stake cultivation is taken to involve the production of mussels on vertical stakes, arranged in straight lines, which are fully or partly exposed at low tide.

3.3. *Is reservation of the name sought under Article 13(2) of Regulation (EC) No 509/2006?*

☒ Registration with reservation of the name

☐ Registration without reservation of the name

3.4. *Type of product:*

Class 1.7. Fresh fish, molluscs and crustaceans and products derived therefrom

([1]) OJ L 93, 31.3.2006, p. 12.

3.5. *Description of the agricultural product or foodstuff to which the name under point 3.1. applies:*

This specification concerns only those products known as 'Moules de bouchot', i.e. cultivated mussels produced exclusively on stakes on the foreshore from larvae caught in their natural habitat. It does not cover mussels that are fished or cultivated in other ways.

To qualify for the 'Moules de bouchot' TSG, the mussels must be fresh, live and intact.

Two species are cultivated to produce 'Moules de bouchot': *Mytilus edulis* and *Mytilus galloprovincialis* (or crosses between the two).

These species are selected for their ability to thrive:

— in the cultivation conditions on the foreshore set out in this specification, and

— with methods and a period of cultivation that ensure the products' specificity and consistency.

The anatomical and organoleptic characteristics of 'Moules de bouchot' are due both to the species itself and also to the particular production method.

3.5.1. Anatomical characteristics

The shell consists of two smooth, regular-shaped halves which are dark brown to slate blue and have concentric striations showing their growth. The minimum shell thickness is 12 mm.

The mussels are characterised by two specific organs: a 'foot', enabling movement of the mussel, and a gland producing byssus (threads whereby it fixes itself to a surface).

Producing the mussels on stakes on foreshores regularly exposed by the outgoing tide means that:

— they develop strong adductor muscles to keep the shell closed when the tide is out, and

— the shell is more resistant and solid when the mussels are harvested because it is hardened by frequent exposure to the open air and the sun.

A distinctive feature of mussels produced on stakes is the flesh-to-shell ratio, consistently high among mussels belonging to the same batch. This ratio is measured on the Lawrence and Scott indicator scale, with 'Moules de bouchot' scoring 100 or more.

Also, 'Moules de bouchot' contain no foreign bodies (such as crabs or grains of sand) and have clean shells (no algae, slime or sand), because a gap of at least 30 cm is left between the ground and the bottom of the ropes or net coils on the stakes.

3.5.2. Organoleptic characteristics

When cooked, the mussel flesh is a cream to yellow colour, more or less orangey depending on the mussels' diet (the presence of carotene and vitamin A in the phytoplankton) and physiological (reproductive) stage. The mussel flesh is smooth, silky and not floury; this is due to the production method making the mussels more resistant to air exposure (when packaged, transported, stored and put up for sale).

The production method also means that the mussels are not in contact with the ground and are therefore not affected by unpleasant tastes or smells (e.g. from slime).

Arrangements for measuring some of these criteria in batches of mussels ready to be marketed are set out in Section 3.6. below (production method).

3.6. *Description of the production method of the agricultural product or foodstuff to which the name under point 3.1. applies:*

The production method for 'Moules de bouchot' involves the following steps:

3.6.1. Fixing the stakes

The mussels are bred in plots or parts of plots in cultivation areas on the foreshore. These are parts of the shoreline affected by wave movements and consisting of the section between the high tide and low tide marks, the width of which is proportional to the gradient of the shoreline when the tide is at its highest.

The stakes are arranged in a series of rows running down from the top of the foreshore. The rows at the top form a storage area for mussels that are big enough for human consumption.

Each plot contains parallel lines of vertical stakes at right angles to the coastline and arranged according to the following maximum density:

— 350 stakes per triple 100 m line,

— 250 stakes per double 100 m line,

— 200 stakes per single 100 m line.

3.6.2. Catching and transporting the larvae

The mussels go through the following stages of development:

— larva: still small enough to move about. Larvae caught on collectors (hemp and/or coconut fibre ropes) can still detach themselves, either by sliding along using their foot or by letting themselves float in the water column,

— spat: firmly fixed to a collector prior to being transferred to the stakes,

— juvenile: surplus spat removed and put into net tubing that is then wound around a stake (a process known as *boudinage*),

— young mussel: the mussel after the spat or juvenile has been definitively fixed to the stake.

3.6.2.1. Catching mussel larvae on collectors

This, a preliminary stage to the actual cultivation of the 'Moules de bouchot', involves getting the mussel larvae to gather on collectors (specially adapted natural supports made of natural biodegradable fibres).

Catching takes place in suitable areas along the coast that are designated and recognised by the competent authorities of the country in question and precisely delineated in a maritime cadastre. The sites have high natural concentrations of mussel larvae brought in by sea currents.

The larvae can also be caught directly on the stakes.

3.6.2.2. Transporting mussel larvae on collectors

Many cultivation areas have no catching grounds in the immediate vicinity. In these cases, the collector ropes have to be brought in from the catching grounds.

Once firmly in place, the larvae develop into spat, growing either on the ropes in holding areas in the cultivation area or directly on the stakes.

3.6.3. Cultivation and harvesting

3.6.3.1. Seeding

Seeding involves coiling the spat ropes and fixing them to the stakes.

It can also refer to the coiling around the stakes of net tubing (*boudins*) containing the spat.

The juveniles grow from spat cultivated on the site and taken from the surplus from other stakes seeded in the same production year.

If, exceptionally, there is a shortage of larvae on the ropes, the competent authorities of the country in question may authorise that the juveniles (to be put into the net tubing) be caught from natural grounds subject to the health supervision rules applied by that country to production sites.

Under no circumstances may hatchery or nursery products be used.

The mussels are cultivated on stakes in plots or parts of plots on the foreshore. 'Moules de bouchot' are cultivated on vertical stakes of a maximum height of 6 metres (part of which is in the ground), which cannot be moved once the spat is secured. The height of the seeded part of the stake is restricted to 3,5 metres.

A minimum 30 cm gap is left between the ground and the bottom of the ropes or net coils when they are fixed to the stakes.

3.6.3.2. Cultivation

This stage — from when the mussels are put onto the stakes to the start of preparations for sale — takes from a minimum 6 to as many as 24 months.

Cultivation first involves placing the right number of individual mussels on the stakes. The mussels in the outer layer grow more quickly than those near the stake. The mussels may be transferred to new stakes during the growth period: the outer layer of mussels is collected and put into net tubing, which is then coiled around a new stake. This is known as *boudinage*.

This can take place several times in the course of the mussels' growth.

The resultant coils are generally fixed to the stakes towards the top of the foreshore.

3.6.3.3. Harvesting

Harvesting takes place after the cultivation process set out in point 3.6.3.2. It involves removing clumps of mussels from the stakes and may be done by hand or by machine.

Picking up fallen mussels from the foot of the stake is not allowed.

3.6.4. Depuration and storage

This takes place after the mussels have been harvested and before they are packaged.

3.6.4.1. Depuration

This is done where necessary to ensure that the mussels are fit for human consumption in line with the rules in force in the country where they are produced and marketed.

After harvesting, the mussels are:

— either put in reserve, in closed, vented containers, within plots or parts of plots on the foreshore where the 'Moules de bouchot' are cultivated, or

— immersed, in closed, vented containers, in onshore tanks of sea water in depuration or dispatch areas.

Where the mussels are put in reserve and kept in a tank, the total time involved may not exceed 15 days.

3.6.4.2. Storage

Storage can take place either on the premises of the producers (see cultivation stage), where they are also suppliers, or in a certified dispatch (or packaging) centre. It involves preserving the mussels, after depuration where necessary and before packaging, by putting them in offshore or onshore tanks.

The mussels may be stored for a maximum of 15 days from being taken out of the water in the cultivation area to being packaged. They may be kept in onshore tanks for no more than 8 days.

3.6.5. Packaging (dispatch)

In the following stage, after any time spent in reserve or in depuration tanks, the mussels are de-clumped, washed and sorted in dispatching centres.

The bars in the grids used for calibrating the mussels must be at least 12 mm apart.

To qualify for the 'Moules de bouchot' TSG, packs must contain mussels that are 12 mm or more thick, with a maximum 5 % of smaller mussels.

The minimum flesh-to-shell ratio is measured on the Lawrence and Scott indicator scale, as follows:

ratio = dry weight of flesh * 1 000/(total weight – weight of shell)

The following 'simplified' indicator can also be used:

'simplified' ratio = weight of flesh after cooking/total weight before cooking

TSG-selected mussels must have a Lawrence and Scott score of ≥ 100.

In response to a substantiated request, the competent authorities of the country in question may, in exceptional circumstances (i.e. unfavourable natural feeding conditions), decide that the ratio for mussels ready for packaging can be adjusted for a particular harvest. However, the ratio may never be 10 % or more below the minimum of 100.

In addition, the mussels must be:

— clean on the outside, and

— alive.

'Moules de bouchot' are packaged and sold in containers with a maximum capacity of 15 kg. They may be sold in bags of 2 kg to 15 kg, or cartons of 0,5 kg to 7 kg.

3.6.6. Sale for direct consumption

Individual packs of 'Moules de bouchot' must be labelled as follows:

— with the name of the TSG, 'Moules de bouchot' featuring in characters that are:

— the largest on the label,

— of identical height and width,

— of the same colour, and

— in a single block,

— with the term *spécialité traditionnelle garantie* (traditional speciality guaranteed), immediately preceded or followed by the STG (TSG) logo with no intervening text,

— all other text, in particular that required under general rules, must be clearly separate from the name of the TSG.

3.7. *Specific character of the agricultural product or foodstuff:*

The specific characteristics of 'Moules de bouchot', stemming from conditions, methods and duration of cultivation that ensure their specificity and regularity, are as follows:

Hard shell

They develop hard shells as a result of being produced in areas where the outgoing tide regularly exposes them to fresh air and sun. This is why they have such a solid shell.

Strong adductor muscle and smooth, silky, non-floury texture

By the same token, the mussels develop strong adductor muscles to keep the shell closed throughout the periods of exposure. The texture of the flesh remains smooth, silky and non-floury thanks to the shell remaining firmly shut during packaging, transport, storage and marketing.

Cream to orangey yellow colour of the cooked flesh

The cultivated mussels are sufficiently well spaced and grow in an environment with a plentiful diet of phytoplankton that lends the flesh a consistent cream to more or less orangey yellow colour. A maximum of 10 % of the mussels have different colouring.

Cleanness and absence of odour from slime and foreign bodies

'Moules de bouchot' have clean shells, contain no foreign bodies (such as crabs or grains of sand) and do not smell or taste of slime, because the ropes or net coils are placed on the stakes at least 30 cm off the ground. As a result, the mussels do not come into contact with the ground.

Consistent flesh-to-shell ratio (minimum 100)

The fact that the stakes are spaced evenly and sparsely and the care taken to distribute the mussels evenly up and down the stakes mean in turn that there is an even spread of mussels across the expanse of water available on the foreshore.

This provides the mussels with the nutritional elements present at different depths in the water and makes for a consistent Lawrence and Scott (flesh-to-shell) ratio of at least 100.

3.8. *Traditional character of the agricultural product or foodstuff:*

The traditional characteristics of 'Moules de bouchot' are as follows:

— they are always cultivated on wooden stakes arranged vertically in lines, and

— their growth is due exclusively to nutritional elements naturally present in the marine environment.

Cultivation activity consists of close surveillance by the mussel farmer and transferring the juveniles so as to ensure consistent growth.

3.8.1. Cultivating mussels on wooden stakes

The tradition of cultivating mussels on stakes goes back to 1235. The story has it that an Irishman, Patrick Walton, was shipwrecked that year in the Bay of Aiguillon; '… the only person saved, he settled in Esnandes and lived off birds he would snare in a special (*allouret*) net stretched above the water between two large poles embedded in the seabed. He soon noticed that mussels gathering on the poles grew bigger and were of a superior quality to wild mussels. He then decided to try to cultivate the molluscs.' (Marteil, 1979).

To this end, he set up lines of stakes on which the mussels could gather and grow. He called the stakes *bouchots*, 'a word of Celtic origin stemming from *bout* (closure) and *choat*/*chot* (wooden stake)'. (Marteil, 1979).

This form of cultivation is still practised today on the same principles. The equipment has evolved a little thanks to certain technical developments.

Over the centuries since, the handful of writers who have taken an interest in mussel farming have emphasised that Patrick Walton's techniques have altered very little. For example, Coste wrote in 1855 that 'the techniques that he [Walton] instituted were so well suited to the ongoing needs of the new industry that almost eight centuries later they are still common practice for the communities whose heritage they have become.'

After 1930, the traditional poles were replaced by stakes (more solid lengths of tree trunk that are thicker than the poles, which also did not last very long).

Changes were made to the cultivation areas after 1950 as a consequence of the first decrees regulating mussel farming. They came under the ownership of the state, which issued licences for their use and supervised them; stakes could no longer be arranged in a 'V' shape as this leads to a build-up of slime. Since then, the stakes have been arranged in parallel lines at right angles to the coastline. Setting up stakes is regulated; the rules vary from one region to another depending on local conditions — the immediate surroundings, the type of beach, sea currents, presence of nutritional elements, etc.

Production methods change in order to improve yields, but the lines of stakes still form the basis of the cultivation areas.

3.8.2. Staggering lines of stakes

In 1855, Coste wrote that the lines of stakes could be staggered in up to four levels.

This practice still continues today. The stakes are arranged in a series of rows running down the slope from the top of the foreshore. The rows at the top form a storage area for mussels that are big enough for human consumption.

3.8.3. Use of natural surroundings only

The mussels are cultivated strictly in their natural surroundings. They are still fertilised naturally in the sea without human involvement, feed exclusively on natural, living phytoplankton and no chemical treatment is used in their marine environment during their growth.

3.9. *Minimum requirements and procedures to check the specific character:*

Points to be checked/tested	Threshold values	Evaluation method	Minimum control rate
Location of stakes	100 % of stakes on the foreshore	Visual and/or document-based verification	20 % of operators each year

Points to be checked/tested	Threshold values	Evaluation method	Minimum control rate
Density of stakes	Up to: — 350 stakes/100 m (triple lines) — 250 stakes/100 m (double lines) — 200 stakes/100 m (single lines)	Document-based verification	20 % of operators each year
Absence of contact with ground or seabed	100 % of stakes	Visual and/or document-based verification	20 % of operators each year
Growing cycle on stakes	100 % of production	Visual and/or document-based verification	20 % of operators each year
Length of growing cycle on stakes	Between 6 and 24 months	Document-based verification	Twice a year
Colour of the flesh when cooked	Cream to orangey yellow Maximum 10 % of mussels with a different colour	Measurement	Twice a year
Analytical check	Lawrence and Scott ratio of 100 or more and shell thickness of 12 mm or more Maximum 5 % of mussels with shell thickness of less than 12 mm	Measurement and/or document-based verification	Twice a year plus self-checks every two months

4. **Authorities or bodies verifying compliance with the product specification:**

4.1. *Name and address:*

Name: CERTIS
Address: Immeuble Le Millepertuis
Les Landes d'Apigné
35650 Le Rheu
FRANCE

Tel. +33 299608282
E-mail: certis@certis.com.fr

☐ Public ☒ Private

4.2. *Specific tasks of the authority or body:*

EN 45011-accredited certifying body responsible for checking compliance with the specification in France. The specified inspection body is responsible for checking the specification in its entirety.