**ANNEX I**

**Specifications of the Protected Designation of Origin Mahón-Menorca**

**A) Product Name**

Protected Designation of Origin Mahón-Menorca

**B) Product Description**

Pressed cheese made from cow’s milk of the Friesian, Mahón-Menorca, or Brown Swiss breeds; the addition of up to 5% of sheep’s milk from the Menorcan breed is permitted.

The milk shall be whole and clean, without any preservatives, and with a balanced composition of fats and proteins, according to the characteristics of the breeds and the time of year, so that the final product has a fat content of no less than 38% on a dry matter basis.

Two types of cheese are covered: Mahón-Menorca Artesano, made with raw milk, and Mahón-Menorca, made in industrial dairies from milk subjected to any preservation process.

For both types, there are two designations: *semicurado* (semi-cured), when the maturation period is less than 150 days, and *curado* (cured), when the maturation period is longer than this period, with the minimum maturation period for Mahón-Menorca Artesano being 60 days.

The characteristics of the cheese at the end of its maturation are as follows:

- Shape: rectangular parallelepiped with rounded edges and corners.

- Height: between 5 and 9 cm.

- Weight: between 0.6 and 4 kg.

- Rind: compact consistency, greasy, and variable colour between yellow and brownish-yellow, with marks from the folds of the cloth (*fogasser*) on the upper side of the artisanal cheeses.

- Paste: firm texture, whole cut, and ivory-yellow colour.

- Flavour: mild acidity, slight lactic flavour, and predominance of spiciness in cured cheeses, becoming more pronounced with longer maturation.

- Eyes: more or less rounded, irregularly distributed, few in number, and variable size not exceeding that of a pea.

- Fat: no less than 38% on a dry matter basis.

- Total dry matter: no less than 50%.

**C) Geographical Area**

The area for the production of milk and the making and maturation of the cheese is the island of Menorca, the second island of the Balearic archipelago, which is the most easterly and northerly.

It is located 18 nautical miles from Mallorca and 130 from Barcelona, with the following coordinates: between 39°48' and 40°5' north latitude and 3°47' and 4°20' east longitude.

**D) Elements Proving the Product’s Origin from the Area**

The elements proving that the cheese of the Protected Designation of Origin Mahón-Menorca originates from its defined production area are:

a) Product Characteristics

The organoleptic, physical, and chemical characteristics of the Protected Designation of Origin Mahón-Menorca cheese, mentioned in section B) of the product description, are related to the natural environment, as well as the production and processing methods.

Nevertheless, since only consumers in the area or those most accustomed to consuming it would be able to identify the cheese with its origin, it needs to be endorsed.

b) Controls and Certification Endorsing the Product’s Origin

1. The milk must come exclusively from farms registered and located on the island of Menorca.

2. The milking and, if applicable, the preservation, collection, and transport of the milk shall be controlled by the entity responsible for the control.

3. The cheese covered by the Designation of Origin is produced exclusively in dairies registered in the corresponding register and controlled by the entity responsible for the control.

4. Maturation takes place in premises registered and controlled by the entity responsible for the control.

5. The final product undergoes the necessary physico-chemical and organoleptic analyses to guarantee its quality.

6. After passing all previous controls, the cheese is marketed with the guarantee of its origin materialised in the Protected Designation of Origin logo and a control number.

**E) Product Obtention**

The milk intended for the production of the Protected Designation of Origin Mahón-Menorca cheese shall come from registered farms and meet the conditions indicated in section B).

Artisanal dairies make the cheese from raw milk immediately after each milking; in contrast, industrial dairies can produce it from milk that has been subjected to any preservation process.

For coagulation, the necessary amount of rennet will be used to ensure coagulation within 30-40 minutes at a temperature between 30 and 34 °C; this temperature must be maintained during the coagulation, cutting, and draining of the curd.

The cutting is done until a small grain size of around 1 cm is achieved, which is then allowed to rest for about 10 minutes before the whey is removed.

The moulding of the Mahón-Menorca Artesano cheese is done manually using the *fogasser*, a square cotton cloth; for Mahón-Menorca cheese, special moulds can be used to give it its characteristic shape.

After pressing, which lasts around 10 hours, the cheeses are salted by immersion in saturated brine for a maximum period of 48 hours.

After salting, the cheeses are air-dried in ventilated rooms for 3 or 4 days and then moved to maturation rooms, where they remain until they achieve the characteristic features of the type of commercialisation (semi-cured, less than 150 days, and cured, more than 150 days).

During maturation, the cheeses are turned and cleaned externally at regular intervals.

Another distinctive practice for Mahón-Menorca Artesano cheese is the superficial treatment of the rind during maturation, which is rubbed with cow's butter, olive oil, or a mixture of olive oil and paprika.

This operation, which is repeated during maturation, prevents the rind from drying out and gives the cheeses their distinctive colour and external appearance.

**F) Link**

**1. Historical**

Due to the terrain and climate conditions, and especially the influence of the winds, livestock farming has always been more important than agriculture in Menorca.

The ancient Greek navigators knew of the livestock wealth of the island of Menorca, which they called Meloussa (“land of cattle”). There is documented evidence of cheese production in the 5th century by the encyclical letter of Bishop Sever in 417, preserved in the Vatican Library, as well as significant trade of this product since the Middle Ages with other parts of the Mediterranean. From the 15th century, the trading company of the Datini brothers from Lucca (Tuscany) extended its networks on the island of Menorca, where they sent merchants to buy wool and cheeses.

The first British domination (1713-1756) greatly boosted livestock farming and cheese production. Governor Kane imported cows and implemented policies to improve pastures, favouring cheese production and export.

During the 18th century, the Port of Mahón became a trading link with the East, between Gibraltar and Malta. Military authorities, when relating to cheese exports from Menorca, added Mahón to indicate the port of origin, thus the product–although produced all over the island of Menorca–acquired the name *Formatge Mahón-Menorca*, by which it is known today.

By Order of 12 November 1980 of the Ministry of Agriculture, the Designation of Origin Mahón was provisionally recognised and registered as a Protected Designation of Origin by Regulation (EC) 1107/96 of the Commission.

Subsequently, Regulation 913/2001 of the Commission modified the name *Mahón* to *Mahón-Menorca*.

**2. Natural**

**a) Topography**

The island of Menorca covers an area of approximately 689 km², divided into two zones: the Tramuntana in the north, more rugged, and the Migjorn in the south, with a smoother and more homogeneous terrain, although with deeper ravines. The highest point on the island is Monte Toro, at 358 m above sea level.

**b) Soils**

Two geological zones are markedly distinguished: the coastal strip, extending from the Port of Mahón to Cape Favaritx, consists of a set of primary Carboniferous terrains: these are homogeneous sediments, pelites with intercalations of grauwacke with calcareous levels, little or not at all detrital, overlaid by Triassic strata alternating with Jurassic and/or Cretaceous deposits, resulting from successive marine invasions.

The southern half is made up of a calcareous and stony sample, entirely constituted by Miocene sediments, crossed by deep ravines.

**c) Climate**

The climate is mild, not exceeding 34 °C in summer and not dropping below 5 °C in winter; the average temperature is 23 °C in summer and 10 °C in winter.

The average annual rainfall is just over 600 mm, which, along with abundant dew due to high humidity from the proximity of the sea, allows for sufficient pasture to feed around 20,000 head of cattle on the island, approximately 15,000 of which are dairy cows.

**d) Hydrography**

The hydrographic network consists of dry streambeds and ravines through which water only flows after heavy rains. The main streams are Gorg, Fontanelles, na Porca, Algendar, and Trebalúger.

**e) Flora and Natural Pastures**

Natural pastures generally occupy land that was previously cultivated and has since been taken over by livestock farming.

These are spontaneous formations of dense and tall grasses, dominated by high-value forage grasses and legumes. The pastures are used directly from November to May. The surplus forage is ensiled and dried in spring (April-May) to sustain the livestock during the months when pastures are scarce.

The flora consists mainly of zulla, ryegrass, *agropyrum*, barley, oats, clover, and ryegrass.

There is often the presence of trees with some undergrowth, represented by scattered holm oaks, wild olive trees, and small patches of mastic.

**3. Production and Processing Systems**

**a) Production**

The already described climatic and soil conditions have led the island of Menorca to focus its agricultural production on dairy cattle farming.

Rural property is divided into *llocs*, agricultural holdings typically managed by a family living on-site, cultivating the land and managing the livestock according to traditional practices.

Traditionally, rotational cropping has been practised. This resulted in the division into *sementers* (sections), allowing for cyclical cultivation: cereals in the first year, forage plants in the second, and fallow (*barbecho*) in the third.

The limitations of water in Menorca, due to its salinity, the depth of the aquifers, priority for human consumption, etc., mean that irrigation is scarce, not reaching 8% of the utilised agricultural area (UAA), mostly located in the municipality of Ciutadella. These are forage productions that are established on rotational parcels. The main crops in the rotation are alfalfa and Italian ryegrass, alternating with maize, sorghum, bersim, and brome.

The current trend is to move towards mowing in the most suitable plots, maintaining grazing on slopes and difficult-to-mechanise land.

These productions form the basis of the livestock feed, which is utilised through controlled grazing, using paddocks from autumn to spring.

During the summer, cows graze at night, consuming stubble.

The characteristic landscape of Menorca, for much of the year, is a combination of various shades of green, depending on the crops, meadows, or tree masses, crisscrossed by a dense network of stone walls, related to the island's livestock specialisation and resulting from the shallow soil depth and the abundance of rocky outcrops. It is estimated that there are over 15,000 km of stone walls that serve as enclosures for fields or paddocks, facilitating rational grazing and saving labour in livestock supervision.

**b) Processing**

One of the most peculiar elements of the production of Mahón-Menorca cheese is its traditional moulding method. The curd, once cut and drained, is placed in a square cotton cloth called a *fogasser*, which is suspended by its four corners and placed on a draining table, where skillful manipulation eliminates the whey and gives cohesion to the curd.

This stage also marks the beginning of pressing, where the cheese starts to acquire its distinctive shape.

Once this stage is complete, the four corners of the cloth are tied together with the *lligam*, a string made from braided fine threads with a small stick at one end that helps with the tightening. The *lligam* tightens the bag as the string is wrapped around the four united corners of the *fogasser*, without tying knots, simply through the tension of the string.

The wrinkles caused by the union of the four corners of the cloth leave a special mark on the upper surface of the cheese, called the *mamella*.

After pressing, the cloth is removed from the pieces, and they are submerged in brine.

Another particular practice of Mahón-Menorca Artesano cheese is the surface treatment of the rind during maturation, rubbing it with cow's butter, olive oil, or a mixture of olive oil and paprika. This process, which is repeated during the maturation, prevents the abrupt drying of the rind and gives the cheeses their characteristic colour and external appearance.

**G) Control Structure**

Regulatory Council of the Protected Designation of Origin Mahón-Menorca

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It is an organisation authorised by the competent authority and accredited by the Spanish National Accreditation Body (ENAC) with the number: 96 /C-PR 179.

**H) Labelling**

The mention Queso Mahón-Menorca shall be mandatory.

The label of the cheese intended for consumption shall include the logo of the Protected Designation of Origin and a control number.