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Geographical indication to be registered Сухиндолска гроздова ракия/Гроздова ракия от Сухиндол/ Suhindolska grozdova rakya/Grozdova rakya from Suhindol

Category of the spirit drink Винена дестилатна спиртна напитка / Wine spirit

Description of the spirit drink

'Suhindolska grozdova rakya' is a wine spirit with a minimum alcoholic strength of 40 % vol., which:

- is obtained by single or double distillation at less than 65 % vol. of wine obtained from grapes, it being permitted to obtain no more than 75 litres of wine from 100 kg of grapes;

- in terms of composition and organoleptic characteristics it meets the requirements for the production of a wine spirit.

The drink is obtained by distilling wine produced from the following varieties of grape: white - Muscat; red - Cabernet Sauvignon and Gamza. Within this combination, it is Muscat which predominates (50 %), the remaining 50 % being made up of Gamza (30 %) and Cabernet Sauvignon (20 %).

Gamza is a wine grape variety which has been grown in Bulgaria since time immemorial. It ripens in the second half of September. The most suitable locations for it are the breezy sites occupied by the vineyards in the municipality of Suhindol, where there are sloping parcels of land facing south, south-east and east with comparatively rich soils. The vine displays average growth, possesses high fertility and produces a high yield. The grapes have a thin (fragile) skin. They are responsible for the rich fruity notes and the aroma of red berries, dominated by raspberry, the fine resinous note, the pronounced but delicate freshness and the light structure of the taste of 'Suhindolska grozdova rakya'.

- Physical characteristics:

Crystal-clear liquid without any opalescence or extraneous impurities. Slightly straw-yellow in colour as a result of having been matured in oak barrels, with an aroma that is typical of the raw materials used and has been further developed by maturing.

- Chemical characteristics:

The wine spirit has a minimum alcoholic strength of 40 % vol. and is produced subject to strict compliance with the requirement that no more than 75 litres of wine be produced from 100 kg of grapes, the wine subsequently being distilled to less than 65 % vol. alcohol.

Alcoholic strength: at least 40 % vol.; Methanol content: no more than 30 grams per hectolitre of 100 % vol. alcohol; Volatile substance content: 220-400 grams per hectolitre of 100 % vol. alcohol.

The volatile substances are another key feature influencing the drink's organoleptic properties. Accredited laboratories' physico-chemical analysis reports submitted to the Ministry of the Economy's Registration, Licensing and Monitoring Directorate for different batches of 'Suhindolska grozdova rakya' indicate the volatile substance content to be 220-400 grams per hectolitre of 100 % vol. alcohol. The volatile substances are a mixture of higher alcohols, total acids, esters and aldehydes. The aroma of the drink is determined by the quantity of esters (44- 52 grams per hectolitre of 100 % vol. alcohol) and aldehydes (20- 76 grams per hectolitre of 100 % vol. alcohol) and its taste by the quantity of higher alcohols it contains (150-250 grams per hectolitre of 100 % vol. alcohol).

- Organoleptic characteristics:

'Grozдова rakya from Suhindol' is a product obtained by means of continuous distillation at less than 65 % vol. of wine produced from Muscat, Cabernet Sauvignon and Gamza grapes. The drink is matured in oak barrels for at least six months and its aroma and taste potential is developed and enriched as a result of the chemical processes that take place. It has a harmonious, fresh, light-structured taste and rich, fruity notes, a balanced after-taste and a not over-pronounced aroma of wood, all of which shape its personality.

Specific characteristics (compared to spirit drinks of the same category)

This drink combines wine made from the following varieties: Muscat (50 %), the emblematic local Gamza variety (30 %) and Cabernet Sauvignon (20%); this results in a rich, balanced and harmonious aroma of red berries, dominated by raspberry, a delicate resinous note, muscat notes, and a delicate freshness and light structure in terms of taste.

Gamza is one of the best-known grape varieties in the Suhindol region. It was widespread long before non-indigenous varieties arrived. It is no coincidence that the cooperative also took the name of the variety when it was formed. The exceptional fruitiness of wine made from Gamza grapes provides the basis for the fine, fresh and outstanding character of the drink. Storage in 5 000-litre oak barrels, made from *Quercus hartwissiana* Stev., helps the fruity aroma develop further.

Under national legislation (Article 155(9) and (10) of the Wine and Spirit Drinks Act (ZVSN)), wine spirits are to be assessed, using a five-point scale, and approved for bottling by the Regional Vine and Wine Chamber responsible for the area in which they are produced. The average assessment for this drink is at least four points.

- Annex1:

1.1. Sample from issue No 2/2000 of the *Lozarstvo i vinarstvo* magazine containing assessments made by the technical committee at Vinaria 2000: 4.25 concerning 'Suhindolska grozdova rakya' (Section II, Category 4, No 6) and accordingly assessments at 4.20 (Nos 49 and 50) concerning award of certificate of distinction - 2 pages.

1.2. Regional Wine-Tasting Commission (RDK) organoleptic analysis and assessment report No 5 of 3 July 2013, from a meeting of the RDK attached to the Mizia Regional Vine and Wine Chamber, Pleven;

1.3. Copy of Certificate of Authenticity No 004 of 3 July 2013 issued by the Mizia Regional Vine and Wine Chamber (RLVK), Pleven, based on an approved model;

1.4. Copy of Certificate of Authenticity No 005 of 3 July 2013 issued by the Mizia Regional Vine and Wine Chamber (RLVK), Pleven, based on an approved model;

1.5. Test Report No LI-2304 of 2 July 2013;

1.6. Test Report No LI-2305 of 2 July 2013.

Geographical area concerned

The grapes are grown and the 'Suhindolska grozdova rakya' wine spirit is produced in the geographical area where the vineyards are situated. The area comprises the municipality of Suhindol, consisting of the town of Suhindol and the villages of Dimcha and Koevtsi.

The vineyards are primarily situated on sloping parcels of land that face south, south-east and east, with a 2-6 degree slope and an elevation of 230-350 m above sea-level.

- The drink may be bottled outside the defined geographical area.

Method for obtaining the spirit drink

- **Harvesting** – the grapes are harvested manually and sorted into special containers (plastic buckets or crates) to protect the fruit from damage. Each grape variety is picked separately by hand when the grapes have reached technical ripeness and have a sugar content of at least 21 %.

- **Transportation** – the grapes are transported without packaging in containers of a suitable design and capacity;

- **Grading** – the grapes are received in batches of a specific quantity and graded according to variety, general outward appearance, sugar content, titratable acid content and pH;

- **Processing** – the grapes are removed from the stems and crushed within two hours of harvesting. The pulp is transferred for fermentation by means of pumps designed for thick liquids;

- **Fermentation method:**

Alcoholic fermentation is controlled and takes place in stainless steel tanks. A pure wine-yeast culture is added. The temperature and relative weight of the fermenting must are monitored and an organoleptic assessment is carried out twice a day, in the morning and in the evening. Heating or cooling are used to correct any sudden changes in temperature that could slow the process. A range of cap sprinkling methods are used to maximise the extraction of the aromatic compounds from the skins of the grapes.

When fermentation is complete, the yeast sediments are removed and stored in metal tanks under inert gas.

- **Distillation method:**

Distillation takes place in continuous stills.

The process is controlled by regulating the flow of the input material, the steam pressure and the quantity of water used to cool the water-and-alcohol vapours.

- **Storage method:** The wine distillate is subjected to organoleptic assessment and stored in stainless steel tanks or transferred to oak barrels to mature for at least six months;

- **Processing method:** The wine distillate is stored in suitable vessels and, if necessary, undergoes processing that is permitted by the ZVSN;

The drink is blended by mixing distillates of different ages and organoleptic characteristics, softened water being added in the amount necessary to reduce its alcoholic strength to 40 % vol. It is treated to prevent clouding and stabilised in accordance with permitted oenological practices. If necessary, caramel is used to correct the colour. It is filtered through a press filter fitted with suitable layers and the alcoholic strength is verified again. Prior to bottling, it is stored in oak barrels or stainless steel vessels at 4-25 °C.

Link with the geographical environment or origin

- Details of the geographical area or origin relevant to the link

The area's relief is characterised by low hilly ridges. The average elevation is 300-400 m above sea-level. The lowest areas are located in the valley of the River Rositsa, at an elevation of 130-150 m above sea-level. In terms of climate, the region is part of Bulgaria's European continental climatic zone and, more specifically, lies within the hilly Danubian Plain climatic region. July and August are the warmest months; January is the coldest month. Soil

and air temperatures are amongst the Suhindol area's main advantages in terms of vine cultivation. Fruiting vines cover 60 ha.

Most precipitation occurs in late spring and early summer (May, June and July). The total annual precipitation is 611 mm/m², which is ideal for the cultivation of vines. In agroclimatic terms, the vineyards are situated in a moderately hot temperature sub-belt (temperature sum of 3 700-4 100 °C per annum) including an area that is prone to drying out. The temperature sum for the period during which the temperature exceeds 10 °C is 3 775 °C.

The town of Suhindol is situated close to the northern margins of the Central Balkan Foreland (Sreden Predbalkan). The elevation is 100-525 m above sea-level, with 2-40° slopes. The exposure of the land varies, but most of it faces south, north or east.

The south-facing slopes of the hilly areas situated below Koevtsi have excellent air circulation, sandy-clayey soil with good moisture retention that is ideal for the cultivation of red varieties (Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Gamza). The land in the Kramolina Valley faces north-east, and the soils are rich in iron and have a humus content of more than 2 %. This makes them ideal for the cultivation of Merlot and Gamza. The soils in the Suhindol micro-area, comprising the southern slopes of the Kramolina valley, have a light mechanical composition containing limestone fragments of various sizes and little organic matter, as a result of which it is suitable for cultivating the white muscat variety.

- History:

The people of Suhindol have a centuries-old tradition of cultivating vines and producing wine. Evidence of this was found at Sopot in the form of a marble 'Heracles and Dionysus' plaque dating from the beginning of our millennium; in addition to Dionysus' usual symbols of power, he is wearing grapes around his head. The thyrsus (a long staff or club) is clad in vine tendrils and topped with vine leaves. (Annex 3 - a monograph entitled 'Suhindol' - an archaeological find from the vineyards at Suhindol). The first written record of the settlement's existence and name appears in a Turkish register dating from the late 15th century, where its name is given as 'SUHENDOL'. Industrial production in the area dates back to 1909. By 1912, a cooperative had been set up, its membership fluctuating from 35 to 57. In that year, a start was made on building a 200 m² two-storey winery, with a wine cellar on the lower floor and a fermentation plant and an office and accommodation for the caretaker on the upper floor. During the first year, the 40 founder members produced 75 000 litres of wine there. Their success encouraged others to join, and membership increased to more than 200 in the following year, with production rising to 250 000 litres of wine and 10 000 litres of wine spirit.

At the end of the 19th century, the vines of the Suhindol micro-area produced about 2 000 000 litres of wine and about 200 000 litres of wine spirit.

An audit carried out in 1914 shows that the cooperative had the following: a grape crusher, an iron safe with a combination lock, an alembic still, two pumps, a filter, a Cyclostyle copier and an asbestos filter. A year later, the cooperative had two wooden containers with a capacity of 30 000 litres, casks and barrels with capacities of 500 and 5 000 litres from Odessa, Budapest, Banya Luka (Bosnia) and Garad (Slovenia), two distillate tanks, with capacities of 500 and 1 000 litres respectively, from the Deroy factory in Paris, a Dutch filter, a Zets filtering system from Vienna that was used to process more than 10 000 litres of wine daily, three wine priming pumps, presses and other equipment.

In 1945, the cooperative's vineyards covered an area of 1 164.5 ha. The exporting of wine in tanks began.

- Annex 2 – Quantity of drink produced annually:

2.1. Report on the work of the management board of the Gamza Vine and Wine Cooperative, Suhindol –report on bottling plant, 2 pages.

2.2. Statement of quantity of drink produced for 1999 – 25 110 litres;

2.3. Statement of quantity of drink produced for the period 2004-13 – 108 621 litres.

Specific characteristics of the spirit drink attributable to the geographical area

The cooler climate and good moisture retention in the Suhindol area provide a rich bouquet of aromas in the grape varieties used. The typical *terroir* for the varieties from which 'Suhindolska grozdova rakya' is produced lies above the town, where the Devetashko plateau begins. The vineyards are situated in the foothills of the Suhindolski vrah, an extinct volcano which, at 472 m, is the highest point on the Danubian Plain. The specific characteristics of the area's climate and soil and its excellent air circulation produce grapes with unique characteristics in terms of aroma and structure. The cooler climate and large temperature amplitudes are conducive to maintaining the freshness [and] delicate qualities of the grapes' aroma and taste. The carbonaceous nature of the local soils also plays a major part in this.

The qualities of the final product known as 'Suhindolska grozdova rakya' are to a large extent determined by the geographical environment.

The distillates are matured in oak barrels in order that they acquire balance and harmony, and this is where they develop their potential. They also take on their characteristic golden colour and rich aromas of spices, vanilla, almonds, chocolate and coffee, as well as their 'smokiness'.

Many vessels used in wine-making in Suhindol are made of oak. Oak is prized owing to its mechanical qualities (strength and flexibility) but also because of certain chemical properties and its fine structure which allows drink that is stored in it to 'breathe'. The most important of the substances that are extracted from oak are phenolic compounds (tannins). All of these qualities are found in *Quercus hartwissiana* Stev. Its wood has a tannin content of up to 5 %. The highest tannin content (8-9 %) is found in the bark of young (15-20 year-old) trees.

The southern flank of the Balkan Mountains is home to stands of *Quercus petraea* (sessile oak). Research has shown Bulgarian oak to be similar to French oak and to have a higher tannin content than American oak.

- Annex 3 - Awards won by the drink, promotional and advertising material:

3.1. Certificate of distinction awarded to two-year old 'Suhindolska grozdova rakya' at the 1999 Vinaria International Vine and Wine Exhibition;

3.2. Certificate of distinction awarded to nine-year old (1995 vintage) 'Suhindolska grozdova rakya' at the 2005 Vinaria International Vine and Wine Exhibition;

3.3. Certificate of participation in the 'Bulgarian Elixirs' category at the Athénée Palace Hilton Hotel, Bucharest, on 29 March 2013;

3.4. Article entitled 'In Suhindol' published in the *Bacchus* magazine in May 2005, 5 pages;

3.5. Promotional material for Suhindol and its ancient vine-growing and wine-making traditions, including the 'young woman with a bunch of grapes', the town's symbol;

- 3.6. Advertising photographs for the Suhindol town fair;
- 3.7. Advertising photographs illustrating the history of Suhindol, vine-growing and wine-making, 3 pages.

European Union or national/regional provisions

The specific requirements for the definition, description, labelling and presentation of the wine spirit 'Suhindolska grozdova rakya' are laid down in the Wine and Spirit Drinks Act (ZVSN), promulgated in State Gazette (SG) No 45/2012 and in force since 16 September 2012:

According to Article 123 of the ZVSN, grape rakia (grozdova rakya):

- is a wine spirit having a minimum alcoholic strength of 40 % vol., obtained by single or double distillation at less than 65 % vol. of wine obtained from grapes, where a maximum of 75 litres of wine can be obtained from 100 kg of grapes;
- contains a quantity of volatile substances equal to or exceeding 125 grams per hectolitre of 100 % vol. alcohol;
- has a maximum methanol content of 200 grams per hectolitre of 100 % vol. alcohol;
- has specific organoleptic properties.

By virtue of this definition and its physico-chemical properties, grape rakia fully corresponds to the definition of a wine spirit given in point 4 of Annex II 'Spirit drinks, Categories of spirit drinks' to Regulation (EC) No 110/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 January 2008 on the definition, description, presentation, labelling and the protection of geographical indications of spirit drinks.

The national procedure for approving spirit drinks with a geographical indication is set out in Section VII, 'Production of spirit drinks with a geographical indication' of Chapter Nine, 'Spirit drinks' of the ZVSN. 'Suhindolska grozdova rakya' was approved as a geographical indication by Order No T-RD-27-18 of the Minister for the Economy and Energy of 27 November, 2013, which has been published on the Ministry of the Economy's website at: <http://www.mi.government.bg/bg/library/zapoved-za-utvarjdavane-na-vinena-destilatna-spirtna-napitka-grozdova-rakiya-s-geografsko-ukazanie-s-505-c28-m361-2.html>

The wine spirit may be placed on the market only if accompanied by a batch test report issued by an accredited laboratory and a copy of a certificate of authenticity issued by the Regional Vine and Wine Chamber (RLVK).

Within the meaning of Articles 5(1)(2) and 6(3) of the Wine and Spirit Drinks Act, the Regional Vine and Wine Chambers are professional organisations of producers, processors and traders of wine-sector products and spirit drinks which are legal persons established pursuant to a decision of the General Assembly of the National Vine and Wine Chamber, such decisions specifying their registered office and territorial jurisdiction. The Regional Vine and Wine Chambers determine the composition of the Regional Wine-Tasting Committees (RDK) and issue certificates of authenticity for the following wine spirits. Producers submit an application to the RLVK, accompanied by a sample from the relevant batch of wine spirit and a copy of the report on the tests carried out on that batch at an accredited laboratory. The RLVK wine-tasting committee draws up an organoleptic assessment stating that, on the basis of its organoleptic and physico-chemical properties, the assessed batch corresponds to its category, i.e. wine spirit with a geographical indication, and may be bottled and placed on the market. The Regional Wine-Tasting Committee includes technical experts engaged in the production of wines and spirit drinks. They are therefore both familiar with the products and actively involved in monitoring their quality before they are placed on the market.

Wine spirit with the geographical indication 'Suhindolska grozdova rakya' is subject to organoleptic assessment by the Mizia Wine and Vine and Wine Chamber, Pleven.

Applicant:

— Member State: Bulgaria / Ministry of the Economy

- Full address (street number and name, town/city and postal code, country):
ul. Slavyanska 8, 1052 Sofia, Bulgaria

Supplement to the geographical indication

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Specific labelling rules

In accordance with the Wine and Spirit Drinks Act, when labelling spirit drinks produced in Bulgaria and intended for the Bulgarian market, the following details must be provided in Bulgarian:

1. the commercial name of the spirit drink;
2. its nominal volume;
3. the 'e' mark, certifying that the quantity of the drink corresponds exactly to that indicated on the label;
4. the actual alcoholic strength of the drink;
5. the number and/or date of the batch preceded by the letter 'L';
6. the number of the technical specification of the drink;
7. the name (business name) and registered office of the producer;
8. the name (business name) and registered office of the bottling company, if the drink has been bottled or decanted into containers with a capacity of up to 60 litres;
9. the number of the producer's registration certificate;

10. The following optional information may be included when labelling a spirit drink:
 1. name of the geographical area in which the drink was produced;
 2. name of the fruit or fruits or name of the raw material from which the drink was produced;
 3. recommended use of the drink;
 4. medals and awards received;
 5. maturing and ageing methods used;
 6. method of production;
 7. number of distillations;
 8. information on the history of the drink and the producer;
 9. information about persons involved in the marketing of the drink.

A geographical indication may be added after the commercial name of a spirit drink if the production phase, from the harvesting of the raw materials to when the spirit drink acquires its specific or final characteristics and properties, takes place in the specified geographical area.