

**APPLICATION FOR REGISTRATION
OF THE DESIGNATION OF ORIGIN / ~~GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATION~~¹
FOR AN AGRICULTURAL PRODUCT OR FOODSTUFF**

I. Applicant

1. Name or first name and surname²:

Regionalny Związek Hodowców Owiec i Kóz [Regional Association of Sheep and Goat Breeders]

2. Seat and address or residence and address:

34-400 Nowy Targ ul. Szaflarska 93 d/7
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3. Mailing address:

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4. Person acting on behalf of the applicant:

Jan Janczy

5. Group:

¹ Delete as appropriate.

² Only a group is entitled to apply for registration – Article 5 of Council Regulation (EEC) No 2081/92 of 14 July 1992 on the protection of geographical indications and designations of origin for agricultural products and foodstuffs (OJ L 208, 24/07/1992, OJ Polish special edition, Chapter 03, Volume 13, p. 4, OJ L 83, 25/03/1997, OJ Polish Special Edition, Chapter 03, Volume 20, p. 352, OJ L 156, 13/06/1997, OJ L 324, 21/12/2000, OJ L 99, 17/04/2003, OJ L 122, 16/05/2003, OJ L 1, 1/01/1995, OJ L 236, 23/09/2003). Pursuant to Article 1 of Commission Regulation (EEC) No 2037/93 of 27 July 1993 laying down detailed rules of application of Council Regulation (EEC) No 2081/92 on the protection of geographical indications and designations of origin for agricultural products and foodstuffs (OJ L 185, 28/07/1993; OJ Polish special edition, Chapter 03, Volume 13, p. 348), in exceptional, duly substantiated cases, an application for registration of a designation of origin may be submitted by a natural or legal person who is the only producer in the geographical area defined at the time the application is submitted. Such a person must demonstrate that they engage in authentic and unvarying local methods and that the geographical area defined in the application possesses characteristics which differ appreciably from those of neighbouring areas or that the agricultural product or foodstuff has characteristics that distinguish it from products of the same category produced in neighbouring areas.

First names and surnames, places of residence and addresses or names, registered offices and addresses of group members	Please indicate whether a group member is a producer or participates in the group's work in another capacity ³
The group includes senior shepherds associated with Regional Association of Sheep and Goat Breeders.	

Enlarge the table if necessary.

II. Specifications

1. Name of the agricultural product or foodstuff:

Bryndza Podhalańska

2. Application for registration of:

Please mark [X] if the applicant is seeking to register the name referred to in point 1 of the specifications as a designation of origin or geographical indication.

(1) designation of origin

X

(2) geographical indication

3. Category of the agricultural product or foodstuff:

Please mark [X] next to one of the categories to which the agricultural product or foodstuff belongs.

Agricultural products listed in Annex I to the Treaty establishing the European Community:		
1.1.	Meat and edible meat offal	
1.2.	Meat products (cooked, salted, smoked, etc.)	
1.3.	Cheeses	X
1.4.	Other products of animal origin (eggs, honey, various dairy products except butter)	
1.5.	Oils and fats (butter, margarine, oil, etc.)	
1.6.	Fruit, vegetables and cereals fresh or processed	
1.7.	Other products listed in Annex I (spices ⁴ , etc.)	

³ Pursuant to Article 5(1) of Council Regulation No 2081/92/EEC of 14 July 1992 on the protection of geographical indications and designations of origin for agricultural products and foodstuffs, other interested natural and legal persons may also participate in the work of the group. Therefore, when providing their data, it is necessary to specify their link with the agricultural product or food.

⁴ Spices that, in accordance with Article 32 of the Treaty establishing the European Community, are classified as agricultural products.

Foodstuffs listed in Annex I to Council Regulation No 2081/92/EEC:		
2.1.	Beer	
2.2.	Natural mineral waters and spring waters	
2.3.	Beverages made from plant extracts	
2.4.	Bread, pastry, cakes, confectionery, biscuits and other baker's wares	
2.5.	Natural gums and resins	
2.6.	Mustard paste	
2.7.	Pasta	
Agricultural products listed in Annex II to Council Regulation No 2081/92/EEC:		
3.1.	Hay	
3.2.	Essential oils	
3.3.	Cork	
3.4.	Cochineal	
3.5.	Flowers and ornamental plants	
3.6.	Wool	
3.7.	Wicker	

4. Description of the agricultural product or foodstuff:

Appearance (external and in cross section)	The surface of the cheese may be even or slightly cracked.
Shape (external and in cross section)	The product has an even or slightly convex surface, sometimes cracked, and does not have a strictly defined shape. Its shape depends on the form of its packaging.
Size	The size depends on the size of the vessel in which the cheese is pressed.
Colour:	White, white-cream or with a shade of aquamarine.
Microbiological, physical and chemical characteristics	Content [%] Water – not more than 60% Dry matter – not less than 40% Fat in dry matter – not less than 38% The content of particular ingredients depends on the season and is related to the quality and composition of the milk.

Other additional information	'Bryndza Podhalańska' belongs to the group of soft rennet brined cheeses pleasing the tongue with their spicy taste and smooth consistency.
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Extend the fields if necessary.

5. Geographical area:

Please specify the geographical area.

The area covers the territory of the Nowy Targ powiat, Tatra powiat and six communes in the Żywiec powiat: Milówka, Węgierska Górka, Rajcza, Ujsoły, Jeleśnia and Koszarawa. The area of the Nowy Targ and Tatra powiats, constituting the vast majority of the geographical area where 'bryndza' is made, is traditionally called Podhale, hence 'Bryndza Podhalańska'. Throughout this area, there are favourable natural conditions and producers with specific knowledge related to traditional production methods. By combining these factors, it is possible to produce in this region a product of appropriate quality.

Enlarge the frame if necessary.

6. Producer:

The fields below shall **only** be completed by a natural or legal person who is the only producer in the geographical area specified in point 5.

Does the geographical area specified in point 5 have characteristics which differ appreciably from those of neighbouring areas?

YES

NO

Does the agricultural product or foodstuff have characteristics that distinguish it from similar agricultural products and foodstuffs produced in neighbouring areas?

YES

NO

Please describe the characteristics that distinguish the geographical area specified in point 5 from neighbouring areas or the characteristics that distinguish the agricultural product or foodstuff from similar agricultural products and foodstuffs produced in neighbouring areas.

Extend the frame if necessary.

Is the agricultural product or foodstuff obtained using authentic and unvarying local methods?

YES

NO

7. Raw materials:

Do all raw materials come from the geographical area specified in point 5?

YES

NO

Please provide information regarding the raw materials used to produce the agricultural product or foodstuff and define the area from which they originate.

1. Sheep's milk:

Sheep's milk used to produce 'Bryndza Podhalańska' comes from sheep of the '*Polska Owca Górska*' [Polish Mountain Sheep] breed. Sheep are milked from late April to early October – after the lamb rearing period that lasts from March to May.

2. Cow's milk:

If cow's milk is used to produce 'Bryndza Podhalańska', it comes from cows of the '*Polska Krowa Czerwona*' [Polish Red] breed, grazing on mountain pastures together with flocks of sheep.

The sheep and cows whose milk is used to produce 'Bryndza Podhalańska' are pastured in the area specified in point 5 of the application. Milking and processing of both sheep's and cow's milk also take place in this area. During the period when sheep or cows do not graze on natural pastures, i.e. mountain meadows, they are fed with hay from the territory concerned.

'Polska Owca Górska' [Polish mountain sheep] – '**Cakla**'

'Cakla' (photos 55-61) is an old, primitive breed of white and coloured sheep, once found in the Southern Carpathians and partly in the Balkans. 'Cakla' sheep arrived in Poland during the movement of Wallachian-Russian shepherding tribes along the Carpathian chain between

the 14th and 16th centuries. '*Cakla*' is closely related to the life and culture of Carpathian highlanders. Its meat was consumed, milk was used to make cheese ('*oscypek*', '*bundz*' and '*bryndza*'), and from its skin and wool clothing and decorative items were made.

Its physique has developed over generations of living in mountainous areas. Sheep of this breed are small, have a harmoniously shaped body, rather thin but strong legs, and double-coated fleece that protects them against the harsh mountain climate. Rams have long, snail-like horns, and ewes are both horned and polled. These sheep produce thick, mixed white and black, reddish or grey wool.

'*Cakla*' sheep from the Silesian Beskids and Podhale were the progenitor of the improved '*Polska Owca Górska*' breed. Improvement activities increased the body weight of adult ewes – approx. 50 kg, while increasing the production and improving the characteristics of fleece. They also increased the milk yield that currently amounts to approx. 60-80 litres within 150 days of pasture-based milking. In the mass population, despite the improvement of the production parameters of this breed, it was possible to preserve its valuable advantages proving excellent adaptation to environmental conditions: good health, longevity, immunity, taste of the meat of young lambs that for years have been exported to the demanding Italian market, and satisfactory – given breeding conditions – milkability and fertility. These phenotypic adaptations to the Podhale mountain environment undoubtedly prove the native nature of the genotype of this population – very valuable and perfectly settled in our culture and the landscape of the region.

'*Polska Krowa Czerwona*' [Polish red cow]

Polish red cattle are the oldest Polish breed of cattle. It had been associated with Slavs for centuries and until the end of the 18th century, '*Polska Krowa Czerwona*' was the most common breed of cattle in Poland. This is a typical dairy and beef cattle breed. It is perfectly adapted to difficult conditions, undemanding in terms of feed quality, resistant, fertile, long-lived and immune to diseases, especially tuberculosis. Cows of this breed produce on average 3,000 to 3,500 litres of milk with high fat content (4-4.5%), and their meat is tender and soft. Different climatic and terrain conditions have shaped different varieties of Polish red cattle. As early as the end of the 19th century, breeders mentioned such varieties as: '*Pierwotna Górska*' – brown in colour, ones found in the Central Carpathians, red – found in the Kraków Upland, as well as lowland, valley, Silesian, and Poznań varieties. The first red cattle barns were built in Stróża in Limanowa powiat in 1876. In 1895, the Polish Association of Polish Red Cattle Breeders was established at the Krakow Agricultural Society, which gave rise to systematic breeding work and, consequently, led to the formation and improvement of this breed in 1884-1934. These cattle were considered the only native cattle breed bred on Polish land.

Interesting information about the international role played by the native cows is provided by J. Bujwid in his publication from 1971 entitled "*Informacje ustne o hodowli polskiego*

czzerwonego bydła” [Oral information on the breeding of Polish red cattle]. Reportedly, during the Congress of Versailles after World War I, Poles, when lobbying for the creation of an independent Poland, presented US President Wilson, a passionate breeder, with an album depicting Polish red cattle.

Enlarge the frame if necessary.

8. Production method:

The production method **must not** be kept secret. Producers that do not belong to the group that has applied for registration may produce and use the registered name if they demonstrate that they produce the agricultural product or foodstuff concerned in accordance with the specification.

Please describe all stages of the production of the agricultural product or foodstuff, with particular emphasis on the techniques, skills and tools used.

Stage 1 – Obtaining the raw material

DESCRIPTION OF TRADITIONALLY USED PRACTICES

Sheep’s milk used to produce ‘**Bryndza Podhalańska**’ comes from the ‘*Polska Owca Górska*’ [Polish mountain sheep] breed. Sheep are milked from late April to early October – after the lamb rearing period that lasts from March to May. From the beginning of May until September, sheep are milked two or three times a day. The first milking usually takes place around 5:00 a.m., the second between 12:00 and 2:00 p.m., and the third around 9:00 p.m. If sheep are milked only twice a day, there is no milking in the evening. From the beginning of September, sheep are milked only twice a day, and from the beginning of October – only once a day, if they still have milk. Sheep are milked from behind.

Cow’s milk, if used at all, comes from cows of the ‘*Polska Krowa Czerwona*’ breed. Cows are milked 2 or 3 times a day, depending on their milkability.

Both cows and sheep graze in mountain glades, meadows and pastures located in the declared area specified in point 5. Where animals are fed hay, it must also come from this area.

REQUIREMENTS

The producer is obliged to use milk obtained from sheep of the ‘*Polska Owca Górska*’ breed and from cows of the ‘*Polska Krowa Czerwona*’ breed.

Stage 2 – Renneting

DESCRIPTION OF TRADITIONALLY USED PRACTICES

After sheep have been milked, the milk is strained and then subjected to curdling. To rennet milk, 1.1-2.7 g of rennet powder dissolved in a small amount of warm water is added per 100 litres of milk. The dose often varies, but it is unrelated to the proportion of sheep’s milk and cow’s milk used. The time of coagulation induced by renneting (the period during which the milk loses its liquidity to acquire high viscosity) is not strictly specified by the producer, but ranges

from 30 to 60 minutes – depending on whether the milk temperature is around 28°C or 39°C. Depending on the temperature of the milk at the time of renneting, the resulting curd is more or less thick.

REQUIREMENTS

The prepared milk needs renneting.

Stage 3 – Curdling

DESCRIPTION OF TRADITIONALLY USED PRACTICES

This is the time between milk renneting and the formation of curds. The entire process takes place in a '*puciera*'⁵ (traditional barrel) and curdling continues until curds are obtained (the moment when the whey separates from the curdled mass). The temperature is kept constant by placing a round wooden lid on the top of the '*puciera*'.

REQUIREMENTS

Curdling needs to be carried out, i.e. the renneted milk should be left until curds are formed. The producer is obliged to carry out curdling in a '*puciera*'.

Stage 4 – Breaking up the curd

DESCRIPTION OF TRADITIONALLY USED PRACTICES

First, the curd is cut crosswise, then after a few minutes, it is broken up vigorously using a '*ferula*'⁶ (a wooden spatula with one or two wires in the middle). After about 3 minutes, a granular mass is obtained. The granules have the size of cereal grains. Breaking up takes place at temperatures from 20°C to 35°C, depending on the producer ('*baka*'). Hot water is added as the curd is being broken up to reach a temperature at which the grains stick together into lumps (approx. 35°C). (Photos 41-45)

REQUIREMENTS

The curd should be broken up using a '*ferula*'. Then the adequate amount of hot water should be added to obtain a temperature at which the grains stick together to form lumps.

⁵ Puciera – a tall wooden barrel, widened upwards, strapped with a metal or wooden brace. The size of a '*puciera*' depends on the amount of milk processed by the shepherds, but it must be relatively easy to handle, which also limits its size.

⁶ Ferula – a wooden stirrer made of hardwood with two to four arms, used to break up the curd and mix the contents of the '*puciera*': see photos Nos. 17-19.

Stage 5– Sedimentation

DESCRIPTION OF TRADITIONALLY USED PRACTICES

The '*puciera*' with the curd broken up should be left until the cheese lumps sink to the bottom, which makes it possible for the whey and cheese lumps to separate.

REQUIREMENTS

After the curd has been broken up, it is left until the cheese lumps sink to the bottom.

Stage 6 – Whey drainage

DESCRIPTION OF TRADITIONALLY USED PRACTICES

The producer ('*baka*') removes 30-50% of the total whey volume from the '*puciera*'. At the same time, the pH decreases by approx. 0.1 on average. Some of the whey is stored in a separate vessel to be used at subsequent stages. The rest is used as food for pigs or to make '*zetyca*'⁷, but is never disposed of.

REQUIREMENTS

The whey should be removed up to 50% of its total volume.

Stage 7 – Dripping

DESCRIPTION OF TRADITIONALLY USED PRACTICES

Having drained the whey, the '*baka*' removes the cheese mass, that is then kneaded by hand and placed in a '*grudka*' (a specially designed cloth sheet). The '*grudka*' is hung on the wall of the shepherd's hut and left for several to a dozen or so hours until the whey has completely drained off. The cheese mass hanging in this sheet of cloth takes on its characteristic loaf shape. The loaf-shaped cheese is called '*udój*', '*gruda*', '*bunc*' or '*bundz*'.

REQUIREMENTS

The cheese mass needs to be removed from the vessel, kneaded by hand, placed in a prepared cloth sheet and left to drain.

Stage 8 – Ripening (fermentation)

DESCRIPTION OF TRADITIONALLY USED PRACTICES

After the loaf-shaped cheese has drained off, it is placed by the '*baka*' on a '*podwysor*'⁸. The cheese is left there and the fermentation process begins. Aging lasts from 4 to 12 days depending on the ambient temperature. When the fermented cheese is cut, a large number of round holes can be seen and its taste is slightly sour. On average, 4 to 6 litres of milk are used to make 1 kg of '*bunc*' ('*bundz*') cheese.

⁷ Zetyca – a beverage obtained through lactic fermentation. Sheep's milk whey. It is also called '*zentyca*', '*zyntyca*', '*rzetyca*' – different spellings and pronunciations depending on the region).

⁸ Podwysor – a special shelf intended for ripening cheeses.

REQUIREMENTS

The cheese should age for 4 to 12 days to initiate the fermentation process.

Stage 9 – Crumbling ‘*bundz*’ (‘*bunc*’)

DESCRIPTION OF TRADITIONALLY USED PRACTICES

Once ‘*bunc*’ has ripened, it is crumbled into small chunks. Each producer has their own method of crumbling ‘*bunc*’, using different techniques, depending on the production method used by the ‘*baka*’.

REQUIREMENTS

Ripened ‘*bunc*’ should be crumbled.

Stage 10 – Beating

DESCRIPTION OF TRADITIONALLY USED PRACTICES

Once ‘*bunc*’ has been thoroughly crumbled, it is mixed and kneaded with salt, added by the ‘*baka*’ “to taste”, until a uniform mass is formed. Then the resulting cheese mass is beaten in a ‘*dzieża*’⁹ or ‘*faska*’¹⁰ in such a way that no air bubbles are formed. In order to preserve the cheese, it is sometimes poured with melted butter, also added at the ‘*baka*’s’ discretion. The finished product is ‘*bryndza*’ – a salty cheese with a characteristic smell and taste. The product may be sold by weight, packed in parchment paper.

REQUIREMENTS

After ‘*bunc*’ has been crumbled, it is seasoned with salt and mixed until a uniform cheese mass is formed to be then beaten in a ‘*dzieża*’. The resulting product is called ‘Bryndza Podhalańska’.

If necessary, extend the fields or enlarge the table to include subsequent production stages.

Additional information regarding the production method:

Variable factors during the production process:

- whey drainage (up to 50%)
- time of ‘*bunc*’ aging and fermentation – from 4 to 12 days
- the amount of salt added to crumbled ‘*bunc*’ – to taste, depending on the producer
- the cow’s milk content must not exceed 40% of the total milk used.

Unacceptable operations:

It is unacceptable to use curdled milk to produce ‘*bryndza*’. Although the use of such milk makes the density of ‘*bunc*’ more uniform, it has a negative impact on the ultimate taste of ‘Bryndza Podhalańska’ cheese.

⁹ Dzieża – a traditional vessel in which cheese is beaten

¹⁰ Faska – a traditional vessel in which cheese mass is beaten and stored

Are all the production stages carried out in the geographical area specified in point 5?

YES NO

Does the final preparation of the agricultural product or foodstuff (e.g. cutting, packaging) take place in the geographical area specified in point 5?

YES NO

If **NO** has been marked at least once, please list the production stages that may be carried out in a geographical area other than that specified in point 5. If this area is limited, please indicate this.

Enlarge the frame if necessary.

Has the method of producing the agricultural product or foodstuff changed in recent years?

YES NO

Please specify whether the changes affected the characteristics or specific quality of the agricultural product or foodstuff.

The production method has not changed significantly in recent years. Over the years, no changes have been made to the design and shape of the tools used to produce 'Bryndza Podhalańska' cheese, as evidenced by comparing photos of museum exhibits and tools currently used.

Enlarge the frame if necessary.

9. Proof of origin:

Please provide information regarding the tradition, origin and history of the agricultural product or foodstuff, as well as historical mentions of the agricultural product or foodstuff being registered found in literature or other source materials (e.g. old recipes, formulas, markings, including labels, quotations from books and press articles, etc.).

Please provide information regarding the procedure adopted to ensure that the agricultural product or foodstuff is manufactured in accordance with the declared production method.

The control of the authenticity of the origin and quality of 'Bryndza Podhalańska' cheese is multi-phase and carried out in several stages, starting from milk production and ending with the control of the marketed finished product. This control creates a coherent system of supervision over the adequate quality of the final product.

Not only does this system include control over the grazing site and the breed of livestock from which the raw material is obtained, but it also enables supervision of the correct course of the production process (in accordance with the specification) and the adequate proportions of the milk used.

The control system accounts for the specific characteristics of sheep grazing in this territory. A list of *'baca'* shepherds dealing with in the production of *'Bryndza Podhalańska'* is kept. Producers intending to start production apply for entry in the aforementioned list.

The *'baca'* – producer is obliged to declare the number of sheep (of the *'Polska Owca Górska'* breed) and cows (of the *'Polska Krowa Czerwona'* breed) and their grazing site. The declaration shall be submitted by the deadline set each year. A special register including all the necessary information regarding sheep owners and all information regarding their livestock is kept.

Each producer keeps a register at the production site in which information regarding the production process is recorded. This makes it possible to reconstruct and trace the product's history.

The inspection body checks the compliance of the production method with the specifications. The origin of the raw material, particular stages of the production process, and the characteristics of the finished product are also checked. All producers and their association are subject to inspection in accordance with the inspection plan prepared and approved by the inspection body.

Enlarge the frame if necessary.

10. Link between the agricultural product or foodstuff and the geographical area:

Please describe how the characteristics of the agricultural product or foodstuff are mainly or exclusively linked to the geographical area specified in point 5 and its characteristic natural and human factors. Please specify whether the agricultural product or foodstuff has a specific quality, is recognised or has other characteristics attributable to its geographical origin.

Historical link

'Bryndza' (this term comes from Romanian – *'brinze'* and was brought along with the Wallachian migrations) is a very old product (belonging to the group of rennet cheeses) made by Wallachian shepherds grazing their sheep in mountain glades. It came to Podhale together with the entire Wallachian culture, grazing organisation, and the way of running a shepherd's hut and milk processing. As early as the 15th century, the founders of the village of Ochotnica in the Gorce Mountains paid tribute and their dues in the form of cheese.

Rennet cheeses¹¹, called Carpathian cheeses, appeared in Polish sources along with the wave of Wallachian migrations that reached Poland along the arc of the Carpathians. At first, these were only mentions referring to the foundation of villages or inspections by administrators of royal estates. As the wave of Wallachian settlements reached the entire Western Carpathians, shepherd culture, including cheese-making, was probably the same throughout this area, with minor local modifications.

Cheese production in Podhale and neighbouring areas is mentioned for the first time when referring to the foundation of the village of Ochotnica in the Gorce Mountains. In **1416**, Dawid Wołoch (David Valachi) was granted the right to found the village. Although this village was established under Środa Śląska law, i.e. German law, some tributes and burdens on the village and its inhabitants are typical of Wallachian law, including a sheep tribute with a cheese tribute being its part. Village residents who kept sheep were obliged to its contribution around St. Martin's Day (11 November) (Długopolski 1921¹²).

In **1473**, the Ratold family from Skrzydlna, who leased out, among others, the Nowy Targ starosty, when dividing their domain, decided to settle Wallachian in order to strengthen themselves economically (Długopolski 1911).

The oldest mention of '*bryndza*' comes from Krakow from **1527**: *Pro triginta caseis brindze* (Starodawne prawa polskiego pomniki [Old Polish law monuments], vol. VI (1881), p. 374 as cited in Kowalska-Lewicka 1967).

Subsequent source materials mentioning indirectly cheese production come from inspections of royal estates. With respect to the first inspection carried out on Polish territory in **1564** in the Nowy Targ starosty, as many as five villages paying sheep tribute were mentioned. In Klikuszowa, the sheep tribute was calculated on 920 sheep and included, among other dues, a cheese fee, while in Szaflary, both sheep and cow cheeses were contributed. It is also known that sheep from the village of Waksmund were grassed by four of its inhabitants "between the mountains", and in the newly founded village of Czarny Dunajec, two settlers had flocks of sheep and also paid for cheese. Sheep tribute was also paid in the village of Olszówka. Villages required to pay sheep tribute were found at that time also in the Gorce Mountains and around Żywiec (Inspection of the Krakow Voivodeship).

Since the material culture related to grazing was greatly influenced by Wallachian shepherds, it is very similar throughout the Western Carpathians, and can be illustrated by analogy with examples from Żywiec, Sucha Beskidzka, the Gorce Mountains and Limanowa.

The inspection carried out in **1564** provided also information about the grazing of flocks of sheep by Wallachians in the Żywiec region in the Lanckorona starosty and the Principalities of

¹¹ Rennet: stomach acid from a calf's stomach dissolved in water, also called '*kłag*'.

¹² Bibliography of items mentioned – Appendix IV.

Oświęcim and Zator. In the Principality of Zator, Wallachians contributed three rams per hundred heads of sheep and one Wallachian cheese for permission to graze their flocks in the summer. The sheep tribute in this area in 1564 brought the treasury 18 rams worth 16 groszy¹³ each, 4 sheep cheeses worth 6 groszy each, and 1 'pokoźleczy' cheese, also worth 6 groszy. In 1574, the then owners of the State of Żywiec – Jan Spytek and Krzysztof Komorowski, on 16 January, granted the town of Żywiec the right to brew beer, and in order to increase also other benefits enjoyed by the townspeople, they issued the following order: “We also order all our Wallachian subjects who have any cheese or bryndza for sale not to take them anywhere and sell, except in our town, Żywiec, ...”. The same in the ordinance “on the Wallachians who are to sell dairy products, cheese and bryndza nowhere but in Żywiec” was approved for Żywiec on 5 February 1626, by the new owner of the State of Żywiec, Queen Constance, wife of Sigismund III Vasa. *This was clearly stated by her in the ordinance “on the Wallachians who are to sell dairy products, cheese and bryndza nowhere but in Żywiec” issued for the town”* (Szcotka 1951).

'*Ser wałaski*' [Wallachian cheese] is found not only in the above-quoted inspection, but also in the act of 1494 (Akta grodzkie i ziemskie [Town and land records]), where it reads “*Duos caseos Walachicos*”, or in a document from the town of Biecz from 1521 where it reads “*Caesi Valachorum*” (Bujak 1914).

In the act of 1605 from Kasina Wielka, there is a mention of '*konef bringze*' (Księgi sądowe wiejskie [Rural court books], vol. I, pp. 304 and 305). It is also found in 1706 in the State of Sucha Beskidzka (Księgi sądowe wiejskie, vol. II, p. 31). It is mentioned several times as '*ser wałaski*' in the files of Kasina Wielka from 1678 (Księgi sądowe wiejskie, vol. I, pp. 313-314). According to Kowalska-Lewicka (1967) it is in all probability the equivalent of the term '*gruda*' [lump] used in other documents, and it was named '*ser wałaski*' in Poland to emphasise its origin. On the other hand, Baranowski (1916) writes that '*ser wałaski*' was part of the tribute paid by the upper Lanckorona villages still in the 17th century, and in the memoirs from Nowy Sącz also from that century, there is a mention of a merchant from Nowy Sącz, Sebastian Śmijewski, who floated copper, nuts and Wallachian cheeses to Warsaw at that time. The fact that they were transported over such a long distance suggests that these were dry cheeses (Kopczyńska-Jaworska 1961).

Documents relating for the foundation of villages in Podhale from the end of the 16th century include information about permission “for free grazing of sheep in the mountains”, which seems to indicate that sheep flocks already existed at that time or that the possibility of owning sheep flocks was considered (Falniowska-Gradowska 1997). It should be noted at this point that in the Nowy Targ starosty, the rentification of most obligations and tributes was very quickly introduced, and thus tributes in kind were replaced with tribute in money.

We have detailed information about fees and tributes applicable in the starosty in the beginning of the 17th century when Mikołaj Komorowski was the staroste of Nowy Targ. This was due to peasants' complaints against the staroste about overstating tributes above the requirements of the inventories. According to the inventories, “subjects keeping sheep were obliged, every three years, to contribute per 100 sheep cheese in such an amount that could be obtained from 100

¹³ Grosz (plural: grosze – used for the denomination two/groszy – used for more than two) – a Polish monetary unit (translator's note)

sheep from one milking, or 40 groszy instead. The staroste increased this tribute and required to be paid 66 groszy each year instead of cheese, and if someone contributed cheese made in a hut, he required it to be as large as could be obtained from the milking of at least 300 sheep (Długopolski 1911). The staroste also ordered to be provided: “lumps, that is cottage cheese or young cheese obtained from one milking of all the sheep in the hut” (Księgi sądowe wielkie, vol. II, p. 572). The level of the sheep tribute, formerly collected only from Wallachian settlers and later extended to all those grazing sheep and goats, was thoroughly considered by the referendary court that regulated it finally in its judgment of **1630**, ordering to follow to the inventories. The staroste was ordered to refund the illegally collected monetary cheese equivalent. Instead of the cheese tribute, settlers could contribute a cheese lump made in a hut – young cheese. The decree forbade the staroste from demanding both cheese and a cheese lump.

Here, for the first time, there is a clear indication that as many as two types of cheese were already made in Podhale at that time: *‘bundz’* and probably steamed cheese.

The sheep tribute and cheese fee for all goats, sheep and rams grazing in the Tatra Mountains are also mentioned in the inventory prepared in **1638** (Baranowski 1909).

Illustrations from the Podhale region from the 16th century mention paying the “sheep tribute” with a lump, which would indicate that it was soft cheese – ‘bryndza’. One of the oldest descriptions of the Tatra Mountains from 1683 also mentions only soft cheese and ‘bryndza’¹⁴.

The first detailed description of how cheese should be made in huts comes from the instruction of the State of Ślemień in the Żywiec region. The instruction was compiled in **1748**, to be written down again in **1773** and recommended to be followed. The original is kept in the archival collections of the Museum of the Żywiec Region in Żywiec (Szczotka 1949). It includes both the fee for shepherds and the method of making cheese. “The first senior shepherd is entitled to food for a year, among others to *‘bryndza’* in the amount of one seven-gallon barrel of the old measure, and since the gallon is bigger now and includes five quarts of the old measure, so according to the current measure this should be less than six gallons, but he should take six gallons.” The second, junior shepherd is entitled to the same amount of *‘bryndza’*. It was emphasised that the *‘baca’* who tends to the cheese in the hut should do this “properly and cleanly”. The senior shepherd, “having measured how large the lumps will be from one milking, should give twenty-one such lumps each week. Once the *‘baca’* has renneted the milk and is removing lumps, he should do this carefully so that *‘żentyca’*¹⁵ is clear, i.e. there are no pieces of cheese left in the whey. Where small cheeses are to be made from these lumps, a mould for them is needed, and the process should be observed by a viewer. Many such cheeses are required to be made and many lumps will be needed. ... And the one who comes from the manor house to collect as many lumps per week as I have specified above, should be an administrator, clerk, senior shepherd or a sworn head of the commune. And this *‘baca’* should make *‘bryndza’* in the presence of these authorities or one of those designated to supervise this...”. This instruction also stated that *‘bryndza’* was also made from goat’s milk. In **1705**, a total of 111 *‘fasks’* (barrels) and 20 quarts of *‘bryndza’* were sold or delivered as ordered in the State of Żywiec, and in **1712**, income was earned from the sale of 105 *‘fasks’* of sheep *‘bryndza’* and 5 *‘fasks’* of goat

¹⁴ Bronisława Kopczyńska-Jaworska, “Etnografia Polska”, Instytut Historii Kultury Materialnej Polskiej Akademii Nauk, 1961, p. 219

¹⁵ Żentyca also known as *‘żyntyca’*, *‘żętyca’*, *‘żętyca’* or *‘rzyntyca’*.

'bryndza', as well as *'żentyca'* for watering pigs (Szczotka 1949).

On 31 March **1739**, Szymon Biegun from Cięcina, the head of the State of Żywiec, bought the Juraś clearing from Jan and Piotr Jurasz for 24 *'twarde'* (monetary unit) and a *'faska'* of *'bryndza'* (Szczotka 1951).

When describing cheese varieties found in Poland, Łukasz Gołębiowski (1830) mentions *'bryndza'* – a soft sheep milk cheese made by highlanders who season it with salt and sell in *'faskas'*, and *'grudka'* – a type of sheep milk cheese made from boiled milk”. He also adds that “Fresh, boiled buttermilk or whey, called *'żyntyca'* or *'ręczycza'*, from sheep’s milk, was used for May medicines, and with goats or dumplings was eaten by servants.”

In **1830**, when describing highlanders, Ambroży Grabowski mentions that they set up huts in the mountains for the entire summer, “to which they collect sheep from all over the area, and make *'bryndza'* and small cheeses (*'oszczyпки'*) from their milk, and then give some of these products to the owners as a profit along with the sheep”.

From the 19th century onwards, as the Tatra Mountains were increasingly explored and visited, more and more descriptions of shepherding customs in the mountain pastures and the process of making cheese in huts and villages in the Podhale region could be found. Cheeses made and eaten in the mountains were also generally mentioned in the increasing number of publications about the Tatra Mountains and published recollection from the stay in these mountains.

Żegota Pauli described the life of shepherds in the Tatra Mountains in the mid-19th century. When describing the Tatra huts, he notes that their front part was used by shepherds as a dwelling, and in the middle of it, there was a fireplace with a cauldron for boiling *'żentyca'* hanging over it. The back part of the hut was closed and was used for storing various items, cheese and *'bryndza'*. Here is his account of cheesemaking: “The milk is strained by the *'baca'* through a cloth into a huge copper cauldron hanging on a hook in the middle of the hut over a burning fire. To induce souring, the *'baca'* adds a little rennet from the calf’s stomach, as a result of which the milk is curdled into cheese and whey, i.e. *'żentyca'* gets separated. After cooling, the *'baca'* collects the floating cheese, makes a large ball of it and puts it in a bag to drain out the rest of the whey, squeezes it out with his hands and puts the whole lump in a chamber, where, using wooden moulds, he makes small round cheeses. Sometimes strips of this cheese are also formed into various decorative shapes, because when fresh, it is very flexible. Most of the cheese is used to make *'bryndza'*. To this end, the *'baca'* puts the balls of the salted cheese on a long board in a chamber next to the hut, and after they have stayed there and fermented for two or three days, the *'baca'* grinds them into *'bryndza'*. The best *'bryndza'* is made from milk obtained in August and September, when the sheep produce little milk, because then it is very fatty; spring milk is thinner and worse. What makes *'bryndza'* particularly tasty, is the extremely fragrant feed from the highest peaks. Drained *'żentyca'*, in which cheese flakes can still be found, is boiled for an hour; then it serves as food for shepherds who drink it using dippers; ... *'żętyca'* is also the only food for shepherd dogs.”

A more extensive and more detailed description of sheep grazing, hut equipment and the cheese-making process is provided by Maria Steczkowska (**1858**). It is also the first such detailed

description of vessels used by shepherds to produce cheese in the Tatra Mountains. “*Juhas*¹⁶ shepherds milk the sheep into milking pails called ‘*gielets*’: in early summer, when the fodder is more plentiful – three times a day; then only twice a day, i.e. in the morning and in the evening. The cows are tended to by wenches called cooks. They pour the sheep’s milk into a high, iron-rimmed bowl, called ‘*puczera*’, and make it clot, i.e. they add some rennet to it, as a result of which cheese is separated from whey, and this whey, boiled in a cauldron, is this ‘*żentyca*’ whose beneficial effects have already been experienced by so many sick people. ... A milking pail containing more than a quart of ‘*żentyca*’, called a dipper by highlanders, is enough for one meal. ... Before the ‘*baca*’ starts working on the cheese, he washes his hands as carefully as possible up to the elbows in clean water several times and wipes them with a clean cloth, brushes back the hair on his head and prevents ash or dust from being blown by the wind into the milk. As agreed, the ‘*baca*’ gives part of the cheese away to the sheep owners. ...The ‘*baca*’ gives away as many pounds of cheese as the agreed number of waters¹⁷ weighs. ... The cheese is kneaded into ‘*brusk*’ cheeses, i.e. discs weighing several pounds each, or ‘*oszczypek*’ cheeses similar in shape to small barrels, made in wooden moulds with various patterns carved inside that are impressed on the cheese. Then the cheeses are left to stay in salt water, which is called brining, and when they get salty, they are dried in the open air or over a fire. Cheeses such as ‘*bryndza*’, that farmers make at home from fresh cheese collected from the ‘*baca*’, are sold at fairs in Nowy Targ and Czarny Dunajec.”

Another detailed description of the shepherding customs and the production of cheese from sheep’s milk in the mountain pastures was provided in the 1870s by priest W. A. Sutor (1876).

The ‘*baca*’ makes the so-called ‘*oszczepki*’, ‘*brusy*’, ‘*kaczki*’, etc. from sheep’s milk cheese in the following way. Well-mixed and kneaded cheese is placed like dough into wooden moulds, or having been stretched into threads, it is braided into various shapes, that, once set, are placed in salt water and then taken out and dried.

In 1899-1904, the Committee of the Krakow Agricultural Society carried out work in the Tatra Mountains to improve the cultivation of meadows and pastures. It was stated that in 1901, 962 cows (equivalent to 16 horses, 242 cows, 75 oxen, 201 heifers, 2,669 sheep, 461 lambs, 28 goats) were grazed in the Western Tatras, for the grazing of which the manor received a tribute of 168 ‘*oszczypki*’ and 6 ‘*bruski*’ as well as 200 korunas and 92 halers for firewood.

A publication of the Ethnological Society in Lviv from 1902 includes a detailed description of the process of making ‘bryndza’: “After milking, the milk is poured into a large wooden vessel called ‘puciera’, strained through a piece of cloth. The ‘baca’ pours rennet into the strained milk, then mixes the milk with a ‘ferula’ and covers it with a clean cloth, placing it near the fire. After an hour, sometimes earlier, depending on the air temperature, the ‘baca’ checks with the ‘ferula’ whether the milk is sufficiently thickened and stirs it with the ‘ferula’, causing the cheese to sink to the bottom. Then he drawn the cheese from the ‘puciera’ and puts it on a cloth called a

¹⁶ Juhas – a junior shepherd (‘*baca*’s’ assistant)

¹⁷ Water – the ‘*baca*’ poured water into the vessel to the same height as the milk; the weight of this water served as a unit of measurement.

'koszycek' or 'grudzielnica', which his assistant called a 'goniec' holds with his hands by two corners, and the other two corners are attached to his belt. The cloth with the cheese is hung for some time to allow the cheese to drain, and then the cheese is placed on a shelf in the chamber. After a few days, such cheese, called 'udój' or 'gruda', begins to ferment and when cut, many round holes can be seen on its surface, and its taste is pleasantly sour. After two weeks, a sheep's milk processing product, i.e. 'bryndza', can be obtained from it.

Zygmunt Jaworski, when describing the economic relations in Podhale, also mentions flock tending. He elaborates on sheep that graze in the Tatra Mountains, their build, names and colour. He emphasises that they belong to the sheep of the *'cakla'* group. The author discusses the quality and quantity of wool and milk obtained from sheep. He also describes in detail the customs related to grazing, building a hut, making arrangements regarding payment for grazing, as well as milking and cheesemaking. Jaworski begins elaborating on the cheese-making process by discussing the production of *'gruda'*, i.e. *'udój'* (*'bunc'* or *'bundz'*), and then **'bryndza'** made from it.

Talking about the production of cheese called *'brusk'*, Jaworski emphasises that it is made only in the Pyszna pasture, and that it is "a cheese disc that is about 30 cm in diameter, 15-18 cm thick and weighs 3-5 kg". He also clearly states that this cheese is prepared slightly differently than *'oszczypek'*. Later, he discusses *'żentyca'* – both sweet and sour. He also discusses legal and ownership relations in pastures and clearings, and finally mentions Liptov dogs – "faithful companions of mountain shepherds" (Jaworski 1902).

In the "Wierchy" yearbook dedicated to the mountains and highlanders (1924), there is a description of payment for milk and sheep grazing. *"When there is a sufficient supply of 'bryndza' to be distributed among the farmers, they are informed when to come for it. Depending on the quality of the pasture and the grazing time, it was agreed to pay 5 pounds of 'bryndza' for grazing one sheep and 1 pound of this cheese for grazing one ewe lamb. The 'baca' is obliged to pay each 'juhas', who receives one 'oszczypek' a day and board; the cost of renting the pasture is borne by the 'baca'.*

The yearbook includes the rules for settling the dues between the *'baca'*, *'juhas'* and the landlord: *"The cheese ('oszcypek') is intended for the remuneration of the 'baca' and each 'juhas' as well as the payment of the rent to the landlord, while farmers receive 'bryndza' and "Having a sufficient supply of 'bryndza' to be distributed among the farmers, they are informed when to come for it. The 'baca' first pays the farmers with 'bryndza', i.e. 'grudka', and uses the rest for 'oszcypek' cheese for himself and to pay his dues."*

Hołub Pacewiczowa (1931) discussed very briefly the legal and social forms applicable to the hut in the pasture and hutkeeping, including dairy production, in an extensive and important paper on pastoral settlement and migrations in the Tatra Mountains and Sub-Tatra region. The author writes as follows: "During the peak season, 2-3 kilogram *'brus'* cheeses are made. The best ones were obtained in the Pyszna pasture. At the end of the season, when the sheep's milkability decreases, *'oszcypek'* cheeses are made and sold. In the past, **'bryndza'** also used to be made, and various spreads were made from the fat removed from sheep's milk (called *'hurda'*), especially for

greasing shirts worn by *'juhas'* shepherds...”, “Sometimes cow’s milk and sheep’s milk is also mixed to make cheese...” The whey from cheese production (*'żentyca'*) is used as food for shepherds. As a rule, cow’s milk is not processed, although butter is made from it in large individual pastures. Sometimes cow’s milk and sheep’s milk is also mixed to make cheese.” As for modern times, what needs to be primarily mentioned is the monumental, many-volume publication entitled *Pasterstwo Tatr Polskich i Podhala* [Shepherding in the Polish Tatra Mountains and the Podhale Region], edited by W. Antoniewicz. Numerous articles included in this publication discussed cheesemaking in the mountain pastures and villages in the Podhale region.

Steamed and then smoked cheese was used to make *'oscypek'* – cheese formed in split moulds¹⁸, cheese having the shape of animals and hearts, and in some mountain pastures, *'brusk'*, i.e. round cheese resembling sharpening stones, i.e. *'brusenka'*, was also made. Sometimes *'bryndza'*, i.e. cheese obtained from *'bundz'* that has been thoroughly crumbled and mixed with salt, was also made in huts. The term for this type of preparation comes from the Romanian *'brinze'* and was brought along with the Wallachian migrations (Brückner 1957).

Depending on the amount of milk obtained, one or up to several pieces of *'gruda'* were prepared. Cheese ferments in the hut for several days. On average, 4.09 litres of milk were used to make one kilogram of cheese. *'Bundz'* prepared in this way was ready to be used to make *'bryndza'*.

We can learn from this publication that it was rarely prepared in huts, but mostly in households. To make *'bryndza'* the cheese was thoroughly crushed and kneaded with salt until uniform mass was obtained. Then it was thoroughly compacted in a vessel called *'dzieżka'* or *'faska'* so that no air bubbles remained. Melted butter was poured on top to preserve the product better. The product prepared in this way could be stored “**from bryndza to bryndza**”, that is until May of the following year and the beginning of the new shepherding season. *'Bryndza'* was one of the most essential highlander food products. It was most often eaten during fasts.

The paper by Bronisława Kopczyńska-Jaworska (1961) on decorated sheep cheeses from the Carpathian Mountains and that by Anna Kowalska-Lewicka (1967) on traditional cheesemaking in Poland must also be mentioned.

Bronisława Kopczyńska-Jaworska (1961) mentions that rennet cheeses can be divided into soft ones, containing a large amount of whey, and hard ones, usually dried. She clearly emphasises (with regard to hutkeeping in Subcarpathia) the production of soft cheese, from which *'bryndza'* is made after its natural fermentation and salting.

Currently, genuine *'Bryndza Podhalańska'*, made in accordance with the historically established method, is produced in the Podhale region, bordered by the Nowy Targ powiat and the Tatra powiat, and in the area of six communes in the Żywiec powiat: Milówka, Węgierska Górka, Rajcza, Ujszoły, Jeleśnia and Koszarawa. Only in this area is it produced in the way described below, which strictly requires that the old recipe be followed.

Natural link with the region

¹⁸ The name *'oscypek'* comes from the word *'scypać'*, which means 'to split' in the local dialect, hence the name of this cheese (translator’s note)

Extensive and seasonal sheep grazing, being a natural characteristic of breeding in the Podhale region sheep providing the raw material (milk) for the production of **'Bryndza Podhalańska'** cheese, follows from the tradition of ancestors who started grazing sheep in this area as early as the Middle Ages. Such a long history of sheep farming and shepherding in the Podhale region made it possible, among others, for a new breed of sheep called *'Polska Owca Górska'* to develop.

'Polska Owca Górska' is an improved type of primitive *'cakla'* sheep found in the Eastern Carpathians and the Balkans. This breed is closely linked to the history and traditions of the Podhale region and its inhabitants. It is perfectly adapted to the climatic conditions and traditional breeding systems in mountainous areas. Sheep of this breed are used in many ways – they provide wool for folk costumes and artistic fabrics, leather for sheepskin coats as well as very tasty, lean meat and milk for making traditional sheep cheeses (including *'bryndza'*, *'oscypek'* and *'bunc'*). Using this breed (*'Polska Owca Górska'* and previously *'Cakla'*) for milk is a centuries-old tradition of the Carpathian peoples. It is the milk obtained from sheep of the *'Polska Owca Górska'* breed that is used to produce *'Bryndza Podhalańska'*.

Wallachians, a nomadic pastoral people from what is now Romania, migrated to the Podhale region over 600 years ago. The Wallachian culture was based on shepherding, including the hut-based breeding of sheep and cattle. This system involved keeping large flocks in summer on upland pastures outside the village and its agricultural land. In these pastures called *'hala'* or *'cerkiel'*, individual owners of small flocks merged them into one flock called *'kierdel'*, entrusting it to a *'baca'* or *'juhas'* shepherds subordinated to the *'baca'*. Sheep called *'cakla'* were milked from May. Their milk was used to make rennet cheeses called *'bundz'* and *'bryndza'* as well as hard, smoked cheese with an extended shelf life – the now famous *'oscypek'*, directly in pastures, in huts. The animals were kept outdoors all summer – only during milking, they were kept in a fenced confinement called *'kosor'*.

Grazing conditions in the region of Podhale and the Tatra Mountains were particularly harsh, as summer here is short, cold and rainy, so particularly unfavourable for sheep, as this species had been domesticated and bred for centuries in a dry, steppe climate. Winter was an even worse time for mountain sheep. In autumn, the flocks were driven to the village on St Michael's Day¹⁹. The animals were given back to their owners to be kept by them during winter. Due to the shortage of fodder, spruce needle-cuts were often used to feed sheep in winter.

In such extreme breeding conditions, a specific breed of sheep, adapted to the mountain climate, developed. This breed, called *'cakiel'*, was the immediate ancestor of *'Polska Owca Górska'* bred now in Podhale. It was a primitive sheep with double-coated fleece that perfectly protected it against the adverse effects of precipitation. The very rapid growth of this fleece, up to 25 cm per year, meant that these sheep were sheared twice a year, in spring and autumn. What characterised

¹⁹ 29 September

this sheep's fleece are wisps consisting of two types of hair: thick, long main hair of the D, DE grade and a thickness of 40-50 microns, and short, soft hair with a thickness of 24-28 microns. Sheep with such structure of fleece have an advantage over sheep with uniform fleece that absorbs rainwater, becomes moist and exposes the animal to significant heat losses. Thick yarn obtained from such wool was used by highlanders to make thick cloth (the famous traditional highlander trousers) and sweaters, and the leather was used to make jerkins and sheepskin coats. Therefore, in the conditions of the shepherding culture of the Podhale region, the mountain sheep serves versatile functions – it provides wool, milk, leather and meat. The sheep are small, late maturing, and weigh no more than 40 kg. Their characteristic feature to this day are their big snail-like or gimlet-shaped horns found in both sexes, especially in rams. Breeders appreciate the sheep's enormous immunity to diseases – from lameness to parasites and lung diseases, as well as its highly developed flock grazing instinct. In the interwar and post-war period, an improved variety of 'cakla', i.e. 'Polska Owca Górska', was developed. It was developed through mating native Podhale sheep mothers with rams of the 'cakla siedmiogrodzkiego' breed imported from Romania and, to a lesser extent, Friesian sheep rams.

These activities increased the body weight of adult ewes – approx. 50 kg, while increasing the production and improving the characteristics of the fleece. They also increased the milk yield that currently amounts to approx. 70-80 litres within 150 days of pasture-based milking. In the mass population, despite the improvement of the production parameters of this breed, it was possible to preserve its valuable advantages proving excellent adaptation to environmental conditions: good health, longevity, immunity, taste of the meat of young lambs that for years have been exported to the demanding Italian market, and satisfactory – given breeding conditions – milkability and fertility. These phenotypic adaptations to the Podhale mountain environment undoubtedly prove the native nature of the genotype of this population – very valuable and perfectly settled in our culture and the landscape of the region.

Sheep of the 'Polska Owca Górska' breed grazed in the Podhale region also feed on very diverse, specific vegetation (specific botanical composition of pastures), which affects the taste and composition of the milk, and consequently gives the product made from this milk a special taste and aroma. In the 1870s, when describing in detail the shepherding customs and the production of cheese from sheep's milk in the mountain pastures, priest W. A. Sutor (1876) wrote as follows: "... They prepare slightly differently 'żentyca' used as a cure for guests. It differs from the regular one in that it is strained and therefore there are no lumps of cheese in it. The best 'żentyca' is obtained from sheep grazing in the high Tatra mountain pastures, where there are plenty of plants and fragrant alpine flowers...". According to *Pamiętnik Towarzystwa Tatrzańskiego* [Memoir of the Tatra Society] (1876): "... when mountain uplands and meadows are in full bloom, they attract botanists who then have the best opportunity to collect the rarest alpine plants...".

The areas where '**Bryndza Podhalańska**' cheese is produced are some of the cleanest areas in Poland and throughout Europe. This area is located in between four National Parks. To the north, there is the Gorce National Park, to the south – the Tatra National Park, to the west – the Babia Góra National Park, and to the east – the Magura National Park. The fifth national park, namely the Pieniny National Park, is located – like the Tatra National Park – in the very heart of the '**Bryndza Podhalańska**' cheese production area.

The final taste of sheep's milk used to make 'bryndza' cheese is largely affected by the specific vegetation occurring in the area of its production. This vegetation, eaten by sheep while grazing,

often occurs only in the Tatra Mountains and the Podhale region.

The Podhale climate is characterised by low average temperature throughout the year, high variability during the day, sudden changes, frequent cloud cover, a large number of days with precipitation (in the higher parts of the mountains, most of the precipitation is in the form of snow), fog, long-lasting snow cover, strong sunlight, and winds usually blowing from the west and south-west. Most phenomena are related to passing atmospheric fronts and force the vegetation to adapt.

Winter in the Tatra Mountains usually lasts from the end of November to the end of March and from mid-October to the beginning of May at the height of Kasprowy Wierch (1987 m a.s.l.) February is usually the coldest month and July is the warmest one. The lowest recorded temperature was -37.5°C in February 1929 and the highest one was +32.2°C in August 1943. Winter temperature inversions (the higher the altitude, the warmer the air) and snowstorms in the middle of summer are characteristic of the Tatra climate.

The conditions in the Podhale region are special and require specific adaptations from plants. Particularly important factors include a significantly shortened growing season, low average annual temperature, significant temperature amplitudes during the growing season, much stronger insolation (direct action of sunlight on surfaces exposed to them) than in the lowlands, strong winds and warm mountain winds, thick snow cover, avalanches, and special properties of soils on limestone and granite.

These conditions affect the characteristics of mountain plants. Insolation facilitates the development of plants, partially compensating for the low air temperature by heating the soil more intensely than in the valleys. At the same time, however, when combined with strong winds, it significantly increases plants' evaporation. Plants living in such conditions show a number of adaptations that protect them against water loss – fleshy leaves and a waxy coating on their surface (cowslip), strongly developed tomentose hair (edelweiss), deposition of calcium carbonate on the surface of the leaves (some saxifrages), stunted growth, pincushion forms. Plants are also largely exposed to mechanical damage, mainly caused by strong winds. Low height also protects against the unfavourable effects of winter winds, as it makes it possible for plants to “hide” under snow.

Due to the difficulties related to pollination (short growing period, frequent bad weather and the resulting small number of insects in the mountains), insect-pollinated mountain flowers usually have intense colours (e.g. spring gentian and Klusius' gentian) and a strong smell resulting from the increased secretion of essential oils enhanced by insolation (e.g. unlike lowland species, the cowslip has a strong odour).

Some of the species occur in Poland only in the Tatra Mountains and the Podhale region. These are²⁰ *Delphinium oxysepalum* (Tatra larkspur), *Linum extraaxillare*, *Gentiana nivalis* (snow gentian), *Gentiana klusii* (Klusius' gentian), *Saussurea alpina*, *Saxifraga hieracifolia* (hawkweed-leaved saxifrage), *Viola alpina*, *Campanula alpina*, *Anthyllis alpestris* (yellow vulneraria),

²⁰ Not all plant species listed have their English names (translator's note).

Hieracium villosum (shaggy hawkweed), *Astragalus penduliflorus*, *Doronicum clusii*, *Sybbaldia procumbens* (creeping sibbaldia), *Geum reptans* (creeping avens), *Ranunculus pseudomontanus*, *Saxifraga aizoides* (yellow mountain saxifrage), *Sedum atraumdark* (stonecrop), *Draba aizoides* (yellow whitlow-grass), *Helianthemum grandiflorum* (rock rose), *Pedicularis oederi*, *Ranunculus thora* (Thora buttercup), *Senecio carniolicus*, *Senecio carpaticus*, *Dianthus glacialis* (glacier pink), *Erigeron nanus* (dwarf fleabane), *Hedysarum hedysaroides* (alpine sainfoin), *Oxytropis carpatica*, *Pedicularis verticillata* (whorled lousewort), *Silene acaulis* (moss campion), *Pinguicula alpina* (alpine butterwort), *Heliosperma quadridentatum*, *Hutchinsia alpina*, *Papaver tatricum*, *Cochlearia tatrae* (Tatra scurvy-grass), *Erigeron hungaricus*, *Erysimum wahlenbergii*, *Soldanella carpatica*, *Saxifraga perdurans*. Other plants often found here include: *Nardus stricta* (matgrass), *Poa alpina* (alpine meadow-grass), *Astrantia major* (great masterwort), *Bellidiastrum michelii*, *Sesleria tatrae*, *Aster alpinus* (alpine aster), *Dryas octopetala* (mountain avens), *Carduus defloratus* (alpine thistle), *Trifolium alpinum* (alpine clover), *Cardamine glanduligera*, *Festuca airoides*, *Oreochloa disticha*, *Vaccinium uliginosum* (bog blueberry), *Juncus trifidus* (highland rush), *Bistorta vivipara* (alpine bistort), *Thalictrum aquilegiifolium* (greater meadow-rue) and *Chamaenerion angustifolium* (rosebay willowherb).

One can also very often find in these areas plants such as *Leontopodium alpinum* (edelweiss), *Lilium martagon* (martagon lily), *Carlina acaulis* (stemless carline thistle), *Crocus scepusiensis*, *Geum montanum* (alpine avens), *Saxifraga aizoides* (yellow mountain saxifrage), *Gentiana punctata* (spotted gentian), *Gentiana asclepiadea* (willow gentian), *Gentiana verna* (spring gentian), *Colchicum autumnale* (autumn crocus), *Dianthus praecox*, *Papaver burseri* (alpine poppy), *Sempervivum montanum* (houseleek), *Archangelica officinalis* (angelica), *Aconitum firmum* (monkshood) and *Pulsatilla alpina* (alpine anemone).

It should be added that the occurrence of some plant species is limited to the so-called ecological niches that determine the specific characteristics of sheep's milk and thus also products made from it. Based on the analysis of selected sheep pastures in the village of Dursztyn, the Turbacz peak, glades and meadows in the Podhale region it can be concluded that some of the plant species found here have no equivalents among plant species from other parts of Poland.

Based on the observations carried out, the species of plants most frequently eaten by sheep in meadows, glades and pastures in the Podhale region include: *Arabis alpina* (alpine rock-cress), *Cirsium erisithales* (yellow thistle), *Viola biflora* (alpine yellow-violet), *Clematis alpina* (alpine clematis), *Senecio subalpinus*, *Soldanella carpatica*, *Doronicum austriacum* (Austrian leopard's-bane), *Aconitum firmum* (monkshood), *Saxifraga carpathica*, *Ranunculus alpestris*, *Silene acaulis* (moss campion), *Vaccinium oxycoccos* (swamp cranberry), *Saxifraga aizoides* (yellow mountain saxifrage), *Cicerbita alpina* (alpine sow-thistle), *Salix reticulata* (net-leaved willow), *Saxifraga perdurans*, *Papaver burseri* (alpine poppy), *Potentilla aurea* (golden cinquefoil) and *Anemonastrum narcissiflorum* (narcissus anemone). It is worth emphasising that these species include many medicinal plants found and used in folk medicine. These are plants containing vitamins, proteins, lipids and elements necessary for good health and proper functioning of the body, such as: magnesium, zinc, selenium, iodine and lithium.

Besides unique natural factors, **'Bryndza Podhalańska'** cheese owes its unique properties to the traditional production method. The documented history of the production of 'Wallachian cheeses' in the Podhale region, from which **'bryndza'** cheese directly originates, dates back to the 15th century. The production of sheep cheese (mountain cheese) was an indispensable element

accompanying sheep grazing in the Podhale region. Shepherds who went with their sheep to the mountain pastures spent several months there. During this period, they ate almost exclusively sheep's milk and its preparations.

Co-ownership of pastures imposed the organisation of collective grazing under the leadership of a selected shepherd (*'baca'*). Moreover, dairy farming related to sheep grazing is profitable only in larger flocks. During summer grazing, the cheese produced provided for the sheep's subsistence (all fees, taxes or tributes (levies) related to grazing). Summer grazing was more than paid off also thanks to wool and an increase in the animal's body weight. With such organisation, it was also possible to avoid involving a larger number of shepherds while increasing the efficiency of the pasture.

The *'baca's'* agreements with sheep owners were always oral, concerned primarily payment for sheep grazing, and were concluded in spring, i.e. in the months preceding grazing. The traditional moment for starting grazing was St Adalbert's Day (23 April), and the traditional moment for grazing to be ended was St Michael's Day (29 September). It should be noted, however, that it depended primarily on the weather conditions in the mountains, and currently the grazing period is slightly longer and lasts from the end of April to the beginning of October.

As early as the third day of the *'baca's'* stay in the pasture, sheep owners came to him to determine the amount of cheese that the *'baca'* would be obliged to pay them for the grazing sheep. Such customary measuring of sheep milk yield was called *'mira'*. Each farmer milked his sheep and poured the milk into one vessel. Then he marked the level of milk in the vessel using a notch on a stick or a board specially designed for this purpose, called *'zamirek'*. Then, a piece of the *'zamirek'* was splintered off at the cut to be taken by the sheep owner, while the *'zamirek'* was kept by the *'baca'* in the hut. When it was time to collect the cheese, the farmer came to the pasture and the right *'zamirek'* was identified by its piece that had been previously splintered off. Then, water was poured into a special vessel called *'mirowa gieleta'* or *'mirowaczny raitok'* up to the level of the notch on the stick and a specific amount of waters was measured in accordance with the *'baca's'* agreement with the owner. The amount of cheese delivered to the owner corresponded to the weight of the water. *'Mira'* was usually paid in *'oscypek'* cheese, but also in *'bryndza'*.

The production of *'bryndza'* cheese is traditionally related to the *'baca's'* hut and, in the final phase of its production, the household, where little has changed over hundreds of years²¹.

Sheep were milked into a *'gieleta'* – a wooden milking pail, then the milk from the morning milking and later milkings was poured into a large *'puciera'* – a vat to which the producer (*'baca'*) added rennet. According to the tradition, milk was mixed with powdered calf stomach the enzymes of which curdled the protein in the milk²². With a *'ferula'*, i.e. a special mixing stick, the producer (*'baca'*) breaks up the curds that form in the milk and then kneads the cheese that

²¹ See Appendix 1 – an album with old and new tools.

²² The properties of rennet were discovered by the producers of *'oscypek'* cheese who, in all probability, noticed that milk stored and carried in bags made, among others, from calves' stomachs became sour and its consistency changed – it became thicker.

curdles in the whey (this activity is called *'puccenie'*). This stage requires a lot of strength and is very tiring for the person doing this. The cheese is then hung up for a few hours in a special canvas sheet to drain completely. Then, after a few days of aging during which the cheese ferments, it is ground (crumbled) and kneaded with salt into a uniform mass in such a way as to prevent air bubbles from forming.

The production method described above is completely unique, rooted in the several hundred years of history and tradition of the Podhale region, and is practised only by producers – *'baca'* shepherds who manufacture cheese in a strictly defined geographical area.

The interplay between the unique natural and human factors described above, in particular the traditional production method that absolutely requires scrupulous compliance with all production stages and knowledge passed down from generation to generation, as well as the unique properties of the region (its fauna and flora), have made it possible for *'bryndza'* cheese from Podhale to gain enormous recognition both at home and abroad. The area of the Nowy Targ and Tatra poviats, constituting the vast majority of the geographical area where *'bryndza'* is made, is traditionally called Podhale, hence **'Bryndza Podhalańska'**.

Enlarge the frame if necessary.

11. Control of the agricultural product or foodstuff:

Please specify whether the control of compliance of the process of production of the agricultural product or foodstuff with the specifications will be carried out by a body or organisational unit competent for the control of agricultural products and foodstuffs with a protected designation of origin or a protected geographical indication.

Name of the body or organisational unit:

**Inspekcja Jakości Handlowej Artykułów Rolno-Spożywczych
[Agricultural and Food Product Quality Inspection]**

Address:

**ul. Wspólna 30
00 – 930 Warszawa**

Telephone number:

+48 22 623 29 00

Fax number:

**+48 22 623 29 98
+48 22 623 29 99**

12. Labelling:

Producers manufacturing the agricultural product or foodstuff in accordance with the specifications are allowed to use the protected designation of origin symbol or the protected geographical indication symbol and use the inscription *'Chroniona Nazwa Pochodzenia'* [Protected Designation of Origin] or *'Chronione Oznaczenie Geograficzne'* [Protected Geographical Indication] on their labelling.

Please indicate whether the applicant intends to use:

The symbol and inscription

Only the symbol

Only the inscription

Neither the inscription nor the symbol will be used

X

Please specify what, if any, rules regarding the labelling of the agricultural product or foodstuff have been adopted.

The registered product will be marked with the Protected Designation of Origin symbol presented below. Besides the name 'BRYNDZA PODHALAŃSKA', the packaging of products intended for sale will include a logo or a logo and the inscription '*Chroniona Nazwa Pochodzenia*' [Protected Designation of Origin]. It is allowed to use the abbreviation 'Ch.N.P.' on the packaging.

The packaging of 'Bryndza Podhalańska' will always contain information about the milk used in its production. The packaging will also include information whether 'Bryndza Podhalańska' is made exclusively from sheep's milk or from a mixture of sheep's and cow's milk in accordance with applicable legal requirements.

It is allowed to use one type of packaging or label by more than one producer. In this case, producers are obliged to define rules and procedures for their distribution and to provide them to the inspection body.

Enlarge the frame if necessary.

13. National requirements:

Please specify whether the specific quality or characteristics of the agricultural product or foodstuff are covered by any national regulations (e.g. standards, provisions).

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Enlarge the frame if necessary.

14. Additional information:

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Enlarge the frame if necessary.

III. List of documents attached to the application:

No.	Document name:

Enlarge the table if necessary.