

Product specification for English Whisky

Competent Authority

Name: Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs

Address: SW Area

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Applicant

Name: English Whisky Guild Ltd (Company No.13140791)

Nationality: British

Full address: c/o Hislop House, 17 Walkergate, Berwick-upon-Tweed, TD15 1DJ

Legal status, size and composition (in the case of legal persons):

Newly set up trade body for English Whisky producers. Legal entity is a Limited Company owned by the members.

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1. Name to be registered

English Whisky, English Whiskey.

Note exemption provided at ANNEX 1.

2. Category or categories of the spirit drink

Whisky/Whiskey (Category 2 in Annex II of retained Regulation 110/2008)

In English, the Geographical Indication allows for two spellings, “ENGLISH WHISKY” and “ENGLISH WHISKEY”; English Whisky without an “e” is the customary term. The customary term for the plural of English Whisky is “English Whiskies”.

In this GI “English Whisky” means a whisky produced in England. Only whisky which is produced in England to the GI standard can be called English Whisky or any geographical description which may evoke the English Whisky name.

The sub-categories are:

- a) Malt English Whisky - whisky produced from malted barley by batch distillation in pot stills
- b) Grain English Whisky - whisky produced from cereals (in pot stills or column stills)

Sub-category prefixes

- Single - whisky produced at a single English distillery.
- Blended - blend of whiskies from more than one English Whisky distillery.

3. Description of the characteristics of the spirit drink

English Whisky is a whisky made from UK grain at an English distillery using water local to the distillery for distilling and mashing and matured in England. English Whisky is a product that epitomises a strong sense of place and provenance with all production processes (except bottling) undertaken exclusively in England. The mild maritime climate, specific geography and geology of England influence the composition of local water used in the production and in product maturation of ‘English Whisky’ creating its characteristic properties.

English Whisky is summarised as a spirit:

- Made from UK Cereal Grain and English water
- Distilled in England.
- Distilled at an alcoholic strength of less than 94.8% by volume in such a way that the distillate has an aroma and taste derived from the materials used.

- Matured in England in Wooden Casks, such as oak (but not limited to), of no more than 700 litres for a minimum of 3 years.
- The final whisky to have a minimum 40% ABV.

3.1 Physical, chemical and/or organoleptic characteristics

The organoleptic characteristics of English Whisky are highlighted by contemporary and inventive flavour profiles. English Whisky can be described as a 'New World' style whisky which is recognised for 'complexity of character' with innovative differences in aromas and flavours profiles, which are championed by individual English distilleries and driven by their skilled modern plant and distilling processes.

Appearance:

English Whisky is a transparent liquid ranging in colour from pale yellow to dark amber/mahogany. The colour of English Whisky derives primarily from the maturation cask. Colour may be adjusted by the addition of plain caramel colouring (E150a), but the resultant colour should not exceed the natural range that can be derived from maturation casks (for example from new casks through to wine casks, sherry and port casks).

Cereal:

English Whisky must be made from cereals grown in the UK. The majority of English Whisky producers use cereals grown in England; however, some distilleries are on the Scottish border, and it would not be viable to ensure the grain was grown in England. (Maltings do not keep individual loads of grain separate in their normal production cycle and most of the peating process during malting happens in Scotland.) The inclusion of cereal from the UK also allows resilience in terms of disease in the growing crops and climate change.

Water:

English Whisky must be produced using water from a supply local to the distillery for mashing and distilling. The naturally occurring mineral composition (hard or soft water) of the water, deriving from England's geological profile, imparts a particular flavour to English Whisky via interaction with the grain during the mashing and distilling processes. Water quality and quantity play an important role in the character and taste of English Whisky and drive the specific English Whisky characteristics associated with each English Distillery.

Adjustments to alcoholic strength prior to maturation are by the addition of water, which may be purified, for example by distillation, demineralisation, or reverse osmosis. The alcoholic strength of "cask strength" English Whisky must not be adjusted after maturation.

Aroma and flavour:

The aroma and flavour derive from the distillation of a fermented mash, followed by maturation in wooden casks stored in England's mild, maritime climate.

The common element of all whiskies is the distillation from cereals in such a way as to retain the aroma and flavour derived from the raw materials with the development of further complexity during years of maturation in wooden casks. However, whiskies produced in different distilleries have some different characteristics.

The characteristics of individual English whiskies are dependent on the type of grain/ mash bill, the specific distillery processes used (including type of still), the local water used for mashing and distilling and the subsequent maturation.

Section 3.2 Specific Characteristics

The common character of all whiskies is the distillation from cereals in a way which retains the aroma and flavour derived from the raw materials together with years of maturation in wooden casks which add complexity.

The mild climate influenced by the gulf stream, the geography, and geology of England influences both the water and raw English ingredients used throughout the production of English Whisky, and its product maturation.

English Whisky is produced in small batches and with limited runs and is designed through the mild climate, innovative cuts, and carefully selected distilling processes to mature within three to four years. The climate has a direct effect on the characteristics and complexity of the end whisky. Increased warmth and speed of maturation results in the complex taste and aroma characteristic of English Whisky. The mild and warm weather enables the spirit to evenly extract wood derived compounds and colour from the cask. English Whisky is a spirit that epitomises a strong sense of place and provenance with all production processes (except bottling) undertaken exclusively in England.

4. Definition of the geographical area

English Whisky is whisky distilled and matured in England, an individual country/ region within the United Kingdom, which is off the North-western coastline of continental Europe. England is bordered by Scotland in the North, and Wales in the West. The Irish Sea lies to the Northwest and the Celtic Sea/ Atlantic lies to the West, to the South lies the English Channel and the North Sea lies to the East.

England includes the Isles of Scilly (to the South-West of Cornwall) and Isle of Wight (South off the Hampshire Coast).

England's official Latitude and Longitude is 53.55 degrees North and 2.4333 degrees West.



5. Production method

English Whisky

- a) English Whisky is a spirit drink produced exclusively by:
 - i. distillation of a mash made from malted UK cereals with or without whole grains of other UK cereals, which:
 - a. has been saccharified by the diastase of the malt contained therein, with or without other natural enzymes.
 - b. has been fermented by the action of yeast.
 - c. has the mash /fermentation / production of wort solely in England
 - d. the distillation of the mash has taken place solely in England
 - ii. distillations must be at less than 94,8 % ABV, so that the distillate has an aroma and taste derived from the raw materials used
 - iii. maturation of the final distillate for at least three years in wooden casks of no more than 700 litres capacity.
 - iv. Maturation must occur solely in England. Note this prohibits the export of casks of English Whisky.

The final distillate, to which only water and plain caramel (for colouring) may be added, retains its colour, aroma and taste derived from the production process referred to in points (i), (ii) and (iii).

- b) The minimum alcoholic strength by volume of whisky or whiskey must be 40 %.
- c) No addition of alcohol, diluted or not, must take place.
- d) Whisky must not be sweetened or flavoured, nor contain any additives other than plain caramel (E150a) used for colouring.

PRODUCTION PROCESS

English Whisky is made from three natural raw materials: UK grain/ cereal (either in part malted or totally malted grain), fermented and distilled using local water and yeast. To create English Whisky there are five production stages and one preproduction stage: Malting, Mashing, Fermentation, Distillation, Maturation and Bottling.

STAGE 1: MALTING (PRE-PRODUCTION)

All grain used (both malted and un-malted) must be from a UK source/ farm.

The first stage of production is the malting of the grain, for English Whisky this is typically done by a third-party Malting House. The grain is steeped in tanks of local water for 2-3 days before being spread out over the floors of the malting house / or in drums to germinate. To stop germination, the malted grain is dried in a kiln. The type of whisky / sub-category of

whisky is determined by the type of malted grain used, i.e. Malt English Whisky uses 100% malted barley, whilst Grain English whiskies will typically have a proportion of un-malted grain or another type of malted grain.

The grain (malted and/or un-malted) is then milled to a rough-hewn grist (very coarse flour).

STAGE 2: MASHING

The Mashing Stage involves the preparation of a mash from milled cereal grains and must be done in England. The milled grain is mixed with hot water in a mash tun. The enzymes of the malted grain convert the starch to fermentable sugars. The heat liquefies the cereal's starch and promotes its breakdown into fermentable sugars. Other natural enzymes may be used for non-malt whisky. This process converts the starch in the grain into a sugary liquid known as 'wort'. The wort is brewed in a batch system with batches processed in a mash tun; the brew liquor is collected from the mash tun or mash filter.

STAGE 3: FERMENTATION

The Fermentation Stage is the fermentation of the brewing liquor by the action of yeast.

The wort is cooled to about 15 ° - 23°C (needs to be under 30 °C for the yeast to survive and prosper) and yeast added to initiate the fermentation stage. The yeast produces ethyl alcohol and a range of other volatile compounds. Typically, the wort is separated from the mash and transferred to a fermenting vat, (note some distilleries process the wort and grain together).

Fermentation must be in England and use local water; the interaction with local water creating a product that is specific to each distillery.

STAGE 4: DISTILLATION

The fermented wort, "wash", is then distilled. The wash is then batch distilled in a still, where distillation separates the alcohol and other congeners from the wash. Distillation must be carried out in England.

The distiller raises the temperature within the still and gradually the fermented liquid is heated until the alcohol in the wash vaporises. The vapours rise up the neck of the still and pass over the head of the still, before being guided through condensers where they revert to liquid ('low-wines'). This liquid is collected in a receiver before a second distillation. Bigger distilleries will have separate stills for each process, a wash still and a second spirit still.

During the second distillation only the heart, or "middle-cut", of the spirit flow will be collected for maturation. The spirit collected must be less than 94.8% ABV (for each distillation).

The first runnings from the still (heads or foreshots) and the final part (tails), are returned for redistillation with the next batch of low-wines. English Whisky is produced from very clean spirit containing limited heads or tails to ensure a quick maturing product.

There are two separate technical processes related to the type of spirit distilled - the more traditional approach obtains a distillate by the use of Pot Stills, while a lighter style spirit is obtained through distillation in Column Stills. To be classed as Malt English Whisky the spirit needs to be batch distilled (not continuous distilled) and at least one distillation in a pot still (note it can be in conjunction with a column) with sufficient copper contact in the vapour path (to support the removal of undesirable compounds and promote the formation of esters and other aromatic compounds).

“Sufficient copper contact in the vapour path” means that during distillation, spirit vapour must come into direct contact with exposed copper surfaces — such as the pot still head, lyne arm, packed copper columns, copper waffles, dephlegmator, or internal column plates. Note: non-functional copper components (such as small fastenings, fittings, bolts, screws, or decorative elements) do not constitute “sufficient copper contact”.

The shape of the stills as well as the composition of the water are particular to individual distilleries and are factors in determining aroma and flavour of the final spirit, known as “New Make Spirit”.

STAGE 5: MATURATION

The “New Make Spirit” must be matured in wooden casks, such as but not limited to oak, for a minimum of three years, the casks must be stored and matured solely in England, benefiting from the warmer milder English climate to create complexity. English Whisky must not be exported from England in maturation casks.

The quality of the casks is important because the new spirit will gain character and colour from the wood in which it matures. New casks or casks that have previously been used to store other alcoholic beverages, for example Madeira, Sherry, Port or Bourbon, can be used. Casks must be empty of their previous contents prior to being filled with “New Make Spirit”. The use of seasoned casks ensures the spirit is not overpowered by excessive wood extracts and tannins but delivers a complex but balanced character to the spirit. The type of wood and level of char impacts on the flavour profile over time. Colour development, which varies in colour from pale gold to dark amber/ mahogany, also depends upon the maturation casks chosen and the length of maturation. In addition, the local climate surrounding the warehouse and position of the cask in the storage warehouse influences the rate of maturation and enables the development of particular flavour attributes. Casks stored nearer the floor will typically evaporate slower and will result in a whisky that has a more interesting palate; whiskies stored high up will tend to be hotter and therefore evaporate faster resulting in a more interesting nose.

Before a spirit is filled into the chosen casks for maturation, the “new make spirit” is typically diluted with water to between 60% and 70% abv.

Maturation affects the spirit in three different ways: it removes the harsher attributes of “the new make spirit”; it adds some additional attributes from the wood (colour and flavours); and it changes the chemical composition of the spirit.

During the maturation in the cask the air penetrates through the porous wood of the casks and contributes to the character of the whisky. A proportion of the spirit (on average 2%) in each cask evaporates each year. Some whiskies are “finished” in a different cask to provide additional complexity to the spirit. Aging stops when the spirit is taken out of the final cask.

Most whiskies are a blend of more than one cask to ensure consistency with the youngest spirit determining the age statement.

STAGE 6: BOTTLING

Whilst STAGES 2-5 must take place within the boundaries of England, bottling may take place outside England once maturation has been completed. Where caramel colouring is carried out it must be carried out in England.

Where “English Whisky” is bottled outside England, it must be shipped in inert bulk containers. The subsequent water used in the final product is demineralised to preserve the organoleptic characteristics of the “English Whisky”. Any bottling taking place outside of England is subject to company controls and official verification, which will ensure the products’ safety and integrity.

English Whisky is typically filtered prior to bottling to remove any particles of wood which have accumulated in the spirit during the maturation process.

Whisky acquires its colour through its maturation in a cask, with each cask of whisky potentially varying in colour due to where in warehouse it was stored, when it was laid down (season and year), and natural variations in the wood. Many distilleries desire a final blend with a consistent colour (over batches and years) and it may be necessary to use very small quantities of plain caramel colouring to adjust the colour (Caramel colouring E150a); it is not to be used for flavouring or a sweetening.

6. Description of the link between the spirit drink and its geographical origin

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

England has a long history of distilling reaching back to before 1636 (in this year The Worshipful Company of Distillers were granted a Charter in England). By the early 1800s England was recognised as a whisky producing area (there are records confirming production as early as 1825), in 1887 there were several English Whisky distilleries were operating from Bristol to Liverpool to London. However, in the late 19th century the English whisky industry faced difficulties due in the main to increased taxation and competition from outside England.

England’s last whisky distillery was in the Lea valley and converted to Gin production before burning down in 1905. Like most industries at the time – the producers tended to operate

near each other as the ancillary skills sets (coopering, logistics) etc needed for that industry also flourished in an industry specific area.

With changes in consumer tastes current modern English whisky production re-started in the early 21st Century (2003) with some 14 distilleries by 2016. Over the following years as the reputation of English Whisky has grown the number of distilleries has steadily risen. By the end of 2023 there were at least 46 distilleries laying down an English Whisky, 25 of which are already selling English Whiskies. In 2022 the formation of the English Whisky Guild brought together much of the industry to discuss and agree common processes etc.

England's varied and temperate climate is ideal for growing barley and other crops such as wheat and contributes to a different ageing profile, which in turn characterises the whisky.

The focus on young whisky (3-5 years old), batch and limited-edition releases rather than age statements is a distinctive feature of English Whisky. Typically, English Whisky Distilleries are small distilleries making products in batches with a particular emphasis on using local ingredients to create a product with a strong English provenance.

6.2 Specific characteristics of the spirit drink attributable to the geographical area

The English Whisky application is based on the qualities, characteristics, and growing reputation of the product referenced to the geographical area from where the whisky is produced.

There is a current and growing reputation of the organoleptic characteristics of English Whisky. English Whisky producers use their skills and expertise to take local cereals and water with their own individual flavours and qualities to create whiskies with contemporary and unusual flavour profiles. English Whisky can be described as a 'New World' style whisky which is recognised for 'complexity of character' with innovative differences in aromas and flavour profiles, which are championed by individual English distilleries.

"One could argue that English Whisky has always inherently been innovative – the last operational distillery in Stratford, Lea Valley, was using advanced distilling equipment well before it was widely adopted by the neighbouring Scotch industry (1887 Barnard says he was surprised to see Lea Valley using metal washbacks 'unlike any we have seen before')."

Today, quality and innovation are still at the heart of what makes English Whisky so unique and exciting. Distillers are adopting techniques from other drinks producers such as wine, cognac, beer and American whiskey, to create a diverse range of flavour profiles from sweet, fruity blends to sherry-led single malts and rich, spicy rye whisky.

It's impossible to compare the styles of any two English Whisky distilleries, for their essence is unique to the people, place and ingredients behind every bottle. However, what they do all have in common is an unwavering dedication to reflecting and championing their locality through flavour and quality." Becky Paskin, Journalist and Founder of Our Whisky.

English Whisky is widely available in the UK from fine wine and spirit merchants and can be purchased online either direct from the distilleries or from major online retailers. English

Whisky is currently exported to over 32 countries including markets in Canada, USA, Europe, Japan and China.

English Whisky has both the national and global reputation of being a quality product, the Scotsman (26/02/22) reported:

‘English whisky is on the march. New distilleries are cropping up the length and breadth of the country – from those with huge investments to smaller artisan producers doing things their own way – and they’re creating a buzz around the whisky drinking world’.

The English Whisky festival held in Birmingham is flourishing and in its fifth year.

On November 28, 2023, 16 whisky producers attended the English whisky showcase at the UK Parliament in Westminster Hall to promote and bring awareness to the growing English whisky sector in England.

Whiskies made in England have been recognised in numerous awards such as:

The English 2010 vintage peated - gold at the 2023 at the World Whiskies Awards.

Necessary Evil Finish Malt Wireworks Malt Whisky - gold medal, 2022 Business Global World Whisky Masters awards.

The Whiskymaker’s Reserve No.4 - World’s Best Single Malt Whisky, World Whiskies Awards, 2022.

Cotswolds Reserve Single Malt Whisky World Whisky Masters – Spirits Business – Gold 2022

English whisky distillers on the whole are small scale independent producers making hand crafted spirits who can experiment with new varieties of locally sourced high-quality grains and a wide range of cask finishes to produce a diverse range of flavours.

Since the rebirth of English Whisky, its quality has been increasingly recognised by respected media such as the Whisky Magazine who have said English Whisky producers are *“uniformly committed to championing locally sourced grains and the spirit of experimentation, the country’s maturing whisky scene is already defined by momentous, harmonious, inspiring heterogeneity”* (Whisky Magazine 183).

It is the emphasis on craftsmanship, quality, experimentation, innovation, and use of local ingredients which epitomises English Whisky. This has led to an English whisky industry which has built a good reputation amongst UK consumers and increasingly, across the world.

7. Labelling and packaging

Spirit drinks must not be labelled, packaged, sold, advertised, or promoted in such a way to suggest they are English Whisky or any of the sub-categories unless they meet the requirements set out in this document.

In this GI “English Whisky” means a whisky produced in England. Only whisky that has been produced to this GI standard within the geographical boundaries of England can be labelled

English Whisky or any geographical description which may evoke the English Whisky Names.

Note Exemption provided at ANNEX 1.

Specific labelling rules and compulsory sales descriptions

The sub-category into which an English Whisky falls must be stated on:

- the container of English Whisky; and
- any individual packaging used for the transportation of the container or used for display purposes during the marketing of the whisky, unless, in both cases, the front of the container is clearly visible through that packaging or the packaging is non-product specific e.g. generic.

But the preceding paragraph does not apply in circumstances specified in ANNEX 1.

The sub-categories are:

- a) Malt English Whisky.
- b) Grain English Whisky.

Sub-category prefixes

- Single
- Blended

The term “Malt” by itself can only be applied to English Whisky where all the whisky in the product has been made using 100% Malted Barley (without the addition of any other cereals), yeast, saccharified by the diastase of the malt contained therein, water and matured in casks; where oak casks are not used, the type of wood must be specified on the front of the label, with a font and weight that give equal prominence to the sub-category information. The spirit must be batch distilled in a pot still (note it can be in conjunction with a column) with sufficient copper contact in the vapour path (to support the removal of undesirable compounds and promote the formation of esters and other aromatic compounds); Malt English Whisky must be distilled for a minimum of two times.

“Sufficient copper contact in the vapour path” means that during distillation, spirit vapour must come into direct contact with exposed copper surfaces — such as the pot still head, lyne arm, packed copper columns, copper waffles, dephlegmator, or internal column plates. Note: non-functional copper components (such as small fastenings, fittings, bolts, screws, or decorative elements) do not constitute “sufficient copper contact”.

The term “Grain” can be applied to English Whisky where the whisky in the product has been made using cereal grain other than 100% Malted Barley and/or the whisky includes non-malted grain.

Where 100% Malted Grain is used but mash includes varieties of malt other than malted barley the term “Malted Grain English Whisky” can be used (or if 100% one type of grain the grain can be named instead).

The term “Single” can only be applied to English Whisky where all the whisky in the product

is distilled at a single distillery (site). The whisky can be distilled in one or more batches at the single distillery.

The term “Blended” can be applied to English Whisky where the whisky in the product has been made using whisky made from more than one distillery site. Blended Malt English Whisky” means a blend of two or more Single Malt English Whiskies distilled at more than one distillery. The term “Vatted” can be used in place of “Blended” when using Malt whisky from more than one distillery site.

The name of the sub-category must be:

- (a) printed in a conspicuous place in such a way as to be easily visible and legible to the naked eye and indelible so that it is clear that it is the sales description of the whisky.
- (b) printed in a way that gives equal prominence to each word making up the name of the category; and
- (c) as prominent as any other description of the whisky on the container or packaging, except for:
 - I. any separate use of the description “English Whisky”;
 - II. any statement relating to the year in which the whisky was distilled, the year in which it was bottled, the period for which it was matured or the age of the whisky and
 - III. any descriptive word or words forming part of the brand name.

But the preceding paragraph does not apply in circumstances specified in ANNEX 1.

The name of the category/ sub-category must not be overlaid or interrupted by other written or pictorial matter; or used in conjunction with any other words. However, a locality or region can be appended to the name of the category/sub-category of the whisky to indicate where the English Whisky was distilled if it appears immediately before the name of the category/ sub-category and the whisky was distilled in the named locality or region.

The label/ name “Pure Malt” is a prohibited description to prevent consumer confusion.

English Whisky must not be labelled, packaged, advertised or promoted in any way that, creates a likelihood that the public may think that it has been distilled at any distillery or place other than the distillery or place at which it was actually distilled.

A whisky or whisky-based drink must not be labelled, packaged, advertised or promoted in a way that includes any reference to a name that is similar to the name of the protected region if, having regard to the presentation of the product as a whole, the reference may create a likelihood of confusion on the part of the public as to where the whisky or whisky-based drink was distilled.

But the preceding paragraph does not apply in circumstances specified in ANNEX 1.

Maturation, age and distillation statements

The maturation period or age may only be specified in the description, presentation or labelling of English Whisky where it refers to the youngest alcoholic component in the drink. In addition, a person must not label, package, sell, advertise or promote any English Whisky

in a way that includes a reference to its maturation period or age unless the maturation period or age is expressed in years.

A person must not label, package, sell, advertise or promote any English Whisky in a way that includes a reference relating to when it was distilled unless:

- (a) the reference relates to a single calendar year.
- (b) all of the whisky in the drink was distilled in that year.
- (c) the presentation of the whisky also includes a reference to
 - I. the year of bottling of the whisky; or
 - II. the maturation period of the whisky; or
 - III. the age of the whisky; and
- (d) the reference to the year of bottling, the maturation period, or age of the whisky appears in the same field of vision as the reference to the year of distillation.

A person must not label, package, sell, advertise or promote any English Whisky in a way that includes a reference to any number (however expressed) if the reference to that number may create a likelihood of confusion on the part of the public as to whether the number relates to the maturation period of the whisky, its age or when it was distilled.

Labelling can make references to the production process or part(s) of it, including reference to the type of cask used for maturation or partial maturation (“finishing” – final period of maturation) of the English Whisky.

Liqueurs made using 100% English Whisky (i.e. no other whisky) can be referred to as English Whisky Liqueurs. The “English Whisky” component of an English Whisky Liqueur must be the sole alcoholic ingredient unless explicitly specified on the label with the same weight as English Whisky.

8. Inspection Body

Name: HMRC, appointed by Regulation 5 of the Spirit Drinks Regulations 2008, as per Article 38 of Regulation 2019/787. Verification via the existing HMRC Drinks verification scheme.

Email: enquiries.sdvs@hmrc.gov.uk

Annex 1

- a) Below are the specific exclusions made to clarify the application of the ENGLISH WHISKY GI versus the pre-existing registered company, associated registered trade marks, indicia and product descriptors: where the fixation of the sub-category in circumstances where the name of a protected locality or a protected region, including the transposition thereof, forms part of the branding of The English Whisky Company (Company no. 1545184) and the name of the protected locality or protected region being included on labelling or packaging of an English Whisky, or an English Whisky-based drink, would result in a tautology or a repetition of terms.

- b) Where the name of a protected locality or a protected region, including the transposition thereof, forms part of the branding of The English Whisky Company (Company no. 1545184) and the transposition of the name of the protected locality or protected region, is only mentioned as part of that company's branding.