

The official quality and origin signs



Appellation d'origine contrôlée **AOC**

A guarantee of quality linked to a "terroir"

Protected designation of origin **PDO**

The European equivalent guarantee



Protected geographical indication **PGI**

A guarantee of the link between a product and its geographical origin



Traditional speciality guaranteed **TSG**

A guarantee of the traditional character of a product



Agriculture biologique

A guarantee of quality linked to a type of production protective of environment

Organic farming

The European equivalent guarantee



Label rouge **LR**

A guarantee that the product is of superior quality

The policy on the quality and origin of agricultural and agri-food products implemented by the Agriculture Ministry is a longstanding one. It was first applied more than a century ago. The French scheme guiding the application of that policy is linked into the European system put in place in 1991 and 1992. It was deeply modified by the French Agricultural Reform Law of 5 January 2006 in order:

- to offer consumers a comprehensive and clear view of the whole of the French and European system for official recognition of quality in agricultural and agri-food products;

- to enhance the credibility of that official recognition by strengthening the guarantee given by government and the checks that underpin the system's legitimacy;

- to allow producers and economic actors to extract more value from their products.

Signs identifying product quality and origin

• A government guarantee

A guarantee of quality linked to origin

- AOC and PDO: the guarantee of quality deriving from a "terroir" .
- PGI: the guarantee of quality deriving from a link between the product and the geographical area in which it has been produced.



A guarantee of quality linked to tradition

TSG



A guarantee of superior quality

Label Rouge



A guarantee of quality linked to respect for the environment and animal welfare Organic Farming



Nota Bene : In addition to the above official signs, there are two other official ways of highlighting the value of products: added-value statements underscoring a specific characteristic linked to the item's mode of production: "farm product", "mountain product", "local country products" and product compliance certification schemes aimed at applying standards to the process of manufacture of a product subject to control by a certifying body.

• Three principles

The system of signs identifying quality and origin is based on a joint commitment by government and professionals (farmers, processors, distributors, etc.) to give consumers a guarantee for products whose origin and quality meet their expectations and to enable them to make informed choices.

The system is based on three principles:

1 / Professionals give voluntary undertakings to implement and monitor programmes focused on origin and quality either individually (organic farming), or collectively (the other official signs). Product quality must imperatively be defined by a set of mandatory specifications drafted by professionals and validated by the authorities. Those specifications set out clearly what makes the product special and the area in which it is produced (for AOC, PDO and PGI products), along with the rules governing production, processing and where applicable the packaging and labelling. Where organic farming is concerned, the mode of production is dictated by EU regulations. Sectors not covered by those regulations may be made the subject of national specifications if the industry so decides.

2 / The authorities exercise oversight of the implementation of the system

- The Ministry with responsibility for agriculture defines policy on food quality and has authority over the system of signs identifying quality and origin. The Ministry is the supervisory authority for INAO.

- INAO, a French public body, manages the quality and origin signs.

INAO has a standing council, national sector committees (PDO wines, PGI wines, agrifood PDOs, agrifood PGIs – TSG – Label Rouge, Organic farming) and an approvals and inspections board. The membership of these constituent bodies comprises representatives of the professionals involved in production, processing and distribution, consumers, qualified experts and government representatives.

INAO examines AOC-PDO, PGI, TSG and Label Rouge applications, monitors the rules applicable to organic farming, supervises all inspections and protects products against illicit use of their registered names.

- The Agence BIO is a French public body answering to the Agriculture Ministry and responsible for developing and promoting organic farming.

3 / Regular inspections are carried out by independent, impartial and competent bodies

These make regular checks on adherence to mandatory product specifications.

INAO's approvals and inspections board lays down the general principles for inspections, approves inspection programmes for the specifications of products covered by quality signs and issues opinions on whether inspection bodies should be officially approved.

• Four key issues

1 / Extraction of greater benefits from their products by producers and economic actors through the creation of value-added and encouragement for the development of product diversity and typicality.

2 / Improvement of the ability of consumers to choose foodstuffs that are of high quality, typical of a region or produced in an environmentally friendly manner. Only these signs are covered by official guarantees and recognition.

against illicit use of product names inside the European Union and third countries based on the European signs (PDO, PGI and TSG).

4 / Fostering of rural and regional development and contributions to:

- preservation of jobs and dynamism in rural areas by bringing producers together around common projects and mobilising them in support of collective programmes for progress,
- preservation of local know-how,
- preservation of the diversity of agricultural production and thereby biodiversity, landscape variety and natural resources.

In this way, the application of a policy promoting signs for the identification of quality and origin, in France, in Europe or more widely around the world, can contribute to the socio-economic dynamic of local communities.

Such policy also turns out to be an especially valuable tool for helping many countries, particularly in the developing world, to extract more value from some of their traditional types of production.

France supports many programmes for the implementation of such tools around the world.

This is a response to the issues raised by the sustainable development of agriculture.

Organic farming

The statement "Organic farming" is an assertion that the product derives from a mode of production and processing that respects natural balances and guarantees high levels of animal welfare as defined in a highly rigorous set of mandatory specifications systematically backed by inspections. This type of production rules out the use of synthetic chemicals and GMOs, in addition to limiting the use of farm inputs.

The first official recognition of Organic farming in France dates back to the Agricultural Reform Law of 1980. Since 1 January 2009, the harmonisation of production rules has been strengthened across the Community and imported products are subject to the same requirements. France has put in place a set of criteria (CCF) for sectors not yet covered by this harmonisation (e.g. rabbits, snails, ostriches).

In 2001, a French public-interest grouping, the Agence BIO, was set up to assist the development and promotion of this form of production.

A wide range of farm and food products, both fresh and processed, is available through various distribution channels: specialist stores, food super- and hypermarkets, bakeries and butcher's shops, basket sales, direct farm sales, sales on street markets, over the Internet and in the catering industry. Since 1 July 2010, the EU organic farm logo has been mandatory on all organic products and this may be accompanied by the French AB mark, which continues to enjoy strong consumer recognition.

Since 2007, INAO, the French National Institute for Origin and Quality, has been helping to monitor the regulations on organic farming.

Some figures (*)

Organic farming relates to nearly 16,500 organic farms (or 3.14% of all agricultural holdings).

The land areas subject to this mode of production total 677,513 hectares (or 2.46% of France's Utilised Agricultural Area).

More than 6,000 operators are certified for the processing of organic products. The total number of organic operators (including producers, processors, distributors and importers) rose above the 25,000 in 2009.

The strong growth in the numbers of such farms is confirmed by parallel structural growth in the market for organic food, which has registered an expansion of more than 10% a year for the last 10 years. Between 2008 and 2009, purchases by end consumers have progressed by 19%. Government is assisting this balanced development of supply and demand by means of a national action plan.

(*) 2009 statistics

In the European Union, Organic farming accounts for approximately 4.3% of Utilised Agricultural Area and 2.9% of all agricultural holdings

Testimonies

Franck Chevallier, an organic farmer in the Essonne

"Because I don't use any artificial pesticides, and therefore no herbicides, I do my weeding with mechanical methods, often supplemented by manual weeding. This means that I am protecting the water table from pollution and saving water resources. Preservation of water quality is imperative for the maintenance of the ecosystem."

Nicolas Verger, an organic market gardener in the Lot et Garonne

"We are producers of organic fruit and vegetables. We centralise production from farmers in the area and sell it in Paris. Aubergines, green peppers, courgettes, carrots...: the special feature of our production is its very wide diversity, which also includes old varieties of tomato." An annual check is carried out to verify our accounts and our purchases as well as the types of organic fertilisers used. Once this has been successfully completed, we receive a certificate allowing us to use the AB mark."

Anne Jézecquel, a laying hen farmer in the Côte d'Armor

"I raise laying hens and grow organic cereal crops on the farm's land. "The hens are free to live outdoors from morning to night. They are able to satisfy their natural instincts."

Mélanie, a student: organic, a different relationship with nature

"If I buy organic it really is because I want to encourage the use of organic production systems, and a different relationship with nature. "I don't mind having to make a few changes to my dietary habits to be able to manage my consumption – especially the financial side. Anyway, all in all, I succeed fairly well."

Appellation d'origine contrôlée AOC Protected designation of origin PDO



The AOC identifies products that owe their characteristics to the geographical context and whose production, processing and finishing have been carried out within a defined geographical area. It stems from a combination of a mode of production and a defined "terroir" acting as a locus for the interaction of factors that are natural (e.g. climate, soil) and human, making the product typical of the area.



An AOC cannot be created – it enshrines an existing form of production.

The AOC is applied to the wines and spirits sector, dairy products, olive oil, fruit and vegetables, meat and honey, etc.

The AOC is the oldest quality sign. Its first definitions in law date back to 1905.



The PDO, the Protected Designation of Origin, is the European equivalent of the French AOC. A PDO protects a product's name in every country in the European Union.

The PDO for agrifood products is governed by Council Regulation (EC) No. 510/2006 of 20 March 2006 on the protection of geographical indications and designations of origin for agricultural products and foodstuffs.

Espelette pepper, Corsican honey, Ile de Ré potatoes, Puy lentils, Bresse chicken, Comté cheese, Isigny butter, Brie de Meaux cheese, etc.

Some statistics (*)

- 49 dairy products, most of them cheeses, generate annual net sales of 1.5 billion euros, or 16% of all matured cheese production in France and a volume estimated at 187,429 tonnes.

- 42 agrifood AOC relate to fruit, vegetables, olive oil and other products, representing annual net sales of approximately 150 million euros.

(*) 2009.

The PDO for wine sector products is governed by Council Regulation (EC) No. 1234/2007 of 22 October 2007 establishing a common organisation of agricultural markets and on specific provisions for certain agricultural products (Single CMO Regulation).

Spirits covered by a designation of origin are governed by Regulation (EC) No. 110/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 January 2008 on the definition, description, presentation, labelling and the protection of geographical indications of spirit drinks.

Alsace, Champagne, Armagnac, Puligny-Montrachet, Blanc Fumé de Pouilly, Banyuls, Calvados, Languedoc, Patrimonio, Tavel, Bourgueil, Jurançon, Pauillac, Cognac, Chablis, Faugères, and many others.

Some statistics (*)

364 wines and spirits protected by designations of origin generate 14 billion euros a year, accounting for over 80% of French wine sector production in terms of value and 59.8% of total area under vines.

(*) 2009

Testimonies



L'huile d'olive AOC de la Vallée des Baux de Provence

This is an oil in whose perfumed scent one can detect hints of raw artichoke, green apple and fresh almond. Vallée des Baux olive oil comes from a small area 7km wide and 25km long to the east of the Rhône River. This stony land gives its olives their distinctive perfume. A distinctiveness acknowledged by the award of an AOC in 1996. "It was the work done over several years by INAO in conjunction with olive growers, processors and pressers that made this recognition possible" says Jean-Pierre Lombrage, President of the Vallée des Baux interbranch olive syndicate. Vallée des Baux oil involves 2,300 producers and represents 20% of national production (400,000 litres a year). The mandatory specifications for the AOC lay down strict requirements in terms of planting density and tree size, ban watering after the initial ripening of the olives, and stipulate that all olives must be processed no later than six days after harvest.

The end result is high quality regularly assessed by means of blind tasting sessions, giving the consumer the certainty of purchasing a unique olive oil.

AOC Saint Émilion

The Saint-Émilion winegrowing area to the east of the town of Libourne is composed of a limestone plateau overlooking the Dordogne River to the south and bounded by the Barbanne stream to the north. In 1999, for the very first time anywhere in the world a vineyard area was declared a World Heritage Site as a "Cultural Landscape".

According to UNESCO, "the Jurisdiction of Saint-Émilion is an outstanding example of an historic vineyard landscape that has survived intact and in activity to the present day". Saint-Émilion also owes its exceptional character as a site to the wide diversity of its terroirs.

The variety of its wines can thus be put down to a remarkable degree of geological diversity and a microclimate perfectly suited to viticulture. This combination, when associated with the professionals' meticulous care for the vines, provides conditions that are ideal for the nutrition and maturity of the Merlot grapes that predominate here. Indeed, the variety of Saint-Émilion wines can also be explained by the expert association of different grape types (largely Merlot but with Cabernet Franc and Cabernet Sauvignon, or in some cases Malbec), enabling them to blossom into a rich palette of nuances of nose and palate that is particularly highly appreciated.



Label rouge LR

The Label Rouge is a french sign that identifies products offering superior quality when compared with other similar more ordinary products due to the conditions in which they are produced or manufactured.



The Label Rouge can apply to poultry, meat, delicatessen meats, dairy products, seafood, fruit and vegetables, etc.

Young corn-fed hens, free-range hen's eggs, tinned sardines, veal from suckled calves, cooked ham, chocolate mousse, churned butter, smoked salmon, etc.

The basic principle underlying the Label was officially recognised in the agricultural reform law of 5 August 1960.

The product must comply at every stage in its production or preparation with a set of mandatory specifications notably stipulating the particular characteristics that underpin its superior quality, along with the main points that must be verified and the method of evaluation (e.g. sensory testing, tasting in the case of food products).

Some figures (*)

- There are over 500 sets of approved product specifications.
- The annual net sales generated by these Labels is in the region of € 1.2 billion.

(*) 2009



Testimony



Impeccably fresh scallops

"The decision to move in the direction of a quality label was taken in 1996," explains Arnaud Manner, Director of the "Normandie Fraîcheur Mer" grouping, "when the 'Coquille Saint-Jacques' designation was approved for all imported pectinids under a WTO agreement enforced through the European Union. This meant that there was a risk of consumer confusion, obliging the industry to differentiate its products from imports, the latter being in many cases farmed shellfish of smaller size from Chile, New Zealand, Peru and other countries..."

The Label was awarded in 2002 for French scallops sold fresh and whole, and belonging to a single species harvested in the Atlantic in the area between La Rochelle and Northern Scotland.

The Label specifications guarantee a yield in terms of scallop and the roe or "coral" of at least 1kg for every 6.5kg of shell and the presence of coral in at least 80% of all shells. They also stipulate that the shellfish must be sorted and cleaned on board the fishing vessel and that the shells must not be cracked or forced open. In particular, the scallops must be sold at fish auction no later than 36 hours from the time of harvest, and shipped on the same day. They can be sold under the Label Rouge only until the evening of the day following their sale at auction. Their labelling must indicate the date of harvest and the name of the fishing vessel. *"The Label enables the producer to generate more revenue", comments Arnaud Manner, "and it has opened the door for us to markets in southern France that previously we were able to penetrate only with difficulty".*

The Label Rouge provides consumers with a guarantee of quality.

Traditional Speciality Guaranteed TSG

The TSG sign protects the registered names of products deriving from methods of manufacture that are traditional but not linked to any geographical origin.



TSG covers cheeses, meat products, beer, cakes and biscuits, etc.

Mozzarella cheese (Italy), Serrano ham (Spain), traditional farmfresh turkey (United Kingdom), Old Gueuze Lambic and Old Kriek beers (Belgium), Kalakukko (a Finnish type of pasty), Falukorv (a Swedish delicatessen sausage), etc.

Such products must:

- either be made from traditional materials,
- or alternatively be based on a traditional composition or a traditional mode of production and/or processing.

The TSG is governed by Council Regulation (EC) No. 509/2006 of 20 March 2006 on agricultural products and foodstuffs as traditional specialities guaranteed.



Testimony



Old Gueuze Lambic, a traditional beer

“Gueuze is an acidic beer whose fermentation occurs spontaneously during the process of manufacture. A spontaneous fermentation beer is obtained by fermenting a cooked wort following natural inoculation from the surrounding air during its cooling.”

It is in these terms that the European Union describes one of the specific features of production that makes Gueuze beer unique and traditional in Belgium. It is a product that has been covered since 1997 by the label “Traditional Speciality Guaranteed” for “Gueuze Lambic” and “Old Gueuze Lambic”. The project was started by Franck Boon, the last brewer in Lembeek, a town that in 1713 had up to 43 brewery-distilleries.

Faced with competition from mass-produced beers based on simplified, industrialised manufacturing methods, two-thirds of producers of Gueuze shut up shop between 1965 to 1995, having either become insolvent or been bought out by one of the large corporate groups (*).

The surrounding air is crucial to this product and it must be brewed in the area between Brussels and Lembeek to ensure that the flow of air that triggers the spontaneous fermentation contains the right yeasts (*Brettanomyces bruxellensis* and *lambicus*). The mandatory specifications for Old Gueuze also stipulate that the manufacturing process must include an initial fermentation in oak casks followed by a secondary fermentation in bottles, all of which involves three years of careful work.

Consumers were apparently quick to tell the difference between industrial Gueuze and Gueuze TSG despite the latter’s 30% higher price: the Boon brewery has increased its production tenfold in the space of ten years, from 450 to 5,000 hectolitres.

(*) Source : Bima n° 1487

Protected geographical indication PGI



A PGI identifies a product whose characteristics are linked to a geographical area in which at least its production or processing have been conducted in clearly defined conditions. It is a European sign that protects the product's name throughout the European Union.

The PGI covers the agricultural, agrifood and winegrowing sectors.



In the case of agrifood products, the PGI comes under the same Community regulation as the PDO (Council Regulation (EC) No. 510/2006 of 20 March 2006 on the protection of geographical indications and designations of origin for agricultural products and foodstuffs).

Emmental from Savoie, Bayonne ham, Agen prunes, Corsica clementines, Camargue rice, young corn-fed hens from Ancenis, beans from Tarbes, plums from Lorraine, chicken from the Landes, Dorset blue cheese (United Kingdom), Greussener Salami (Germany), Turrón from Alicante (Spain), mel do Alentejo (Portugal), etc.

Some figures (*)

- 96 agrifood PGIs have been registered in France (notably for poultry, fruit and vegetables and delicatessen meats).
- Products covered by PGIs generate annual net sales of about 1.2 billion euros

(*) 2009 statistics

The wine PGI comes under the same Community regulation as the PDO (Council Regulation (EC) No. 1234/2007 of 22 October 2007 establishing a common organisation of agricultural markets and on specific provisions for certain agricultural products (Single "CMO Regulation"). Since 1 August 2009, with the entry into force of the new common organisation of the wine market, country wines ("vins de pays") have automatically become PGI wines.

PGI Pays d'Oc, PGI Atlantic, PGI Hérault, PGI Aude, PGI Côtes-de-Gascogne, PGI Castilla y Leon (Spain), PGI Toscano, and so on.

Some figures (*)

- 150 PGI wines have been registered in France. They represent one-third of all French production.
- Two ciders have also been registered.

(*) 2009 statistics

Testimonies



PGI Bayonne ham, a sign that protects a region's reputation

Red/pink in colouring, enveloped and shot through with bright white fat, Bayonne ham offers a silky texture that carries long-lasting spicy, peppery tastes. It melts in the mouth with a delicate savour free of excessive saltiness.

Its characteristics are linked to local know-how capable of making the best possible use of the favourable climatic factors prevailing in the Adour area and exploiting its subterranean deposits of rock salt.

The salting and curing of ham is a centuries-old tradition in these areas that lie between sea and mountain. As Bertrand Ecomard of the Bayonne Ham Consortium reminds us: *"It was the only way of saving up food for the season of heavy work in the fields and to get through the cold of winter at a time in history when sterilisation or pasteurisation were unknown and mechanical refrigeration an impossibility."*

The PGI is a genuinely effective factor for regional development and the reinvigoration of rural areas in that it adds value to their specific characteristics: a geographical and climatic area, specific expertise, tradition and cultural values, all of which make it true that *"everything is good with Bayonne ham"*.

The "Pays d'Oc" PGI

In a geographical context highly conducive to viticulture, the extraordinary diversity of the soil/climate combinations in the Languedoc Roussillon region that lies between the shores of the Mediterranean and an altitude of 400 metres has made possible the successful planting of many prestigious grape varieties and the production of a wide range of high-quality products. Hence Mediterranean varieties such as Grenache, Cinsaut and Syrah, for which the preferred use is in rosé wines, are found side by side with French grapes with international reputations that have arrived more recently, such as Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon and Pinot Noir for red wine, Chardonnay, Sauvignon and Viognier for white wine, to name only the most important. In order to assure the high quality of these products, production conditions and inspection parameters are tightly defined and the wines are systematically tested by tasting.

As the foremost product designation for exports, the "Pays d'Oc" PGI is core to the renewal of viticulture in the Languedoc Roussillon and helps maintain its vineyards as a fundamental structural component of life in the villages and the development of the region as a whole

