

OTHER ACTS

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Publication of an application pursuant to Article 6(2) of Council Regulation (EC) No 510/2006 on the protection of geographical indications and designations of origin for agricultural products and foodstuffs

(2012/C 150/07)

This publication confers the right to object to the application pursuant to Article 7 of Council Regulation (EC) No 510/2006 ⁽¹⁾. Statements of objection must reach the Commission within six months of the date of this publication.

SINGLE DOCUMENT

COUNCIL REGULATION (EC) No 510/2006**'FICODINDIA DI SAN CONO'****EC No: IT-PDO-0005-0647-26.09.2007****PGI () PDO (X)****1. Name:**

'Ficodindia di San Cono'

2. Member State or Third Country:

Italy

3. Description of the agricultural product or foodstuff:**3.1. Type of product:**

Class 1.6. Fruit, vegetables and cereals, fresh or processed

3.2. Description of the product to which the name in point 1 applies:

The 'Ficodindia di San Cono' PDO is reserved for fruits from the following cultivars of the *Opuntia ficus-indica* species, grown in the territory defined in Article 4: 'Surfarina', also known as 'Gialla' or 'Nostrale', — 'Sanguigna', also known as 'Rossa', — 'Muscaredda' or 'Sciannarina', also known as 'Bianca'. A maximum percentage of 5 % of local ecotypes of 'Trunzara' selections is also accepted. Ficodindia (cactus pear) fruits are differentiated as follows:

- quality: Quality A ('Agostani') if they are obtained from the first flowering; Quality B ('Tardivi' or 'Scozzolati') if they are obtained from the second flowering,
- category: EXTRA and I, as defined by the Codex Alimentarius.
- weight: between 105 g and 140 g, 140 g and 190 g, 190 g and 270 g (with a 5 % tolerance), classes B, C and D respectively of the Codex Alimentarius.

When released for consumption, 'Ficodindia di San Cono' fruit must have the following characteristics: weight of the fruit > 105 g (5 % tolerance); refractometric rating not less than 14 %; firmness of the flesh not less than 5 kg/cm². Colour: shades ranging from green to orange-yellow for the yellow cultivar ('Gialla'), from green to ruby red for the red cultivar ('Rossa') and from green to straw-white for the white cultivar ('Bianca').

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 93, 31.3.2006, p. 12.

3.3. *Raw materials (for processed products only):*

—

3.4. *Animal feed (for products of animal origin only):*

—

3.5. *Specific steps in production that must take place in the identified geographical area:*

Depending on the weather, harvesting takes place from 20 August until 30 September for first flowering fruit ('Agostani') and from 10 September until 31 December for second flowering fruit ('Tardivi' or 'Scozzolati'). Harvested fruits must have their prickles removed so that they can be marketed as 'prickle-free' fruits.

The production and packaging of 'Ficodindia di San Cono' must take place in the area defined in Article 4 so as to ensure that transportation or excessive handling do not gash or damage the fruits or bruise their skin, thereby affecting their distinctive colour and sheen.

3.6. *Specific rules concerning slicing, grating, packaging, etc.:*

Once it has been processed and has had its prickles removed, the product must be released for consumption in new packaging: wooden, plastic or cardboard crates and plastic or cardboard trays. The use of alveoli is permitted in the crates. The packages must weigh 0,5 kg, 1 kg, 2 kg, 2,5 kg, 3 kg, 3,5 kg or 5 kg, with a maximum deviation of 10 %. The packages must be sealed by thermo-soldering or with staples where netting is used so as to make it impossible to handle the contents without breaking the container. Traditionally, fruits from the three different cactus pear cultivars ('Surfarina' or 'Nostrale' or 'Gialla'; 'Sanguigna' or 'Rossa'; 'Muscaredda' or 'Sciannarina' or 'Bianca') can all be present in the same container. A maximum percentage of 5 % of local ecotypes of 'Trunzara' selections is also acceptable.

3.7. *Specific rules concerning labelling:*

The packages must bear the 'Ficodindia di San Cono' logo, as reproduced below, and the EU symbol. The following is also permitted: the use of the words 'Cactus Pear'; the term 'Fiorone' on packages containing fruit weighing between 105 g and 130 g; the date on which the product was harvested; the logo which consists of the wording 'D.O.P. Denominazione di Origine Protetta' and of three cactus pears bearing crowns set out in a fan pattern above five stars and the map of Sicily, with 'Ficodindia di San Cono' written underneath.



4. **Concise definition of the geographical area:**

The production area of 'Ficodindia di San Cono' covers a territory situated at an altitude of between 200 and 600 metres above sea level and includes the following municipalities: San Cono (CT), San Michele di Ganzaria (CT), Piazza Armerina (EN) and Mazzarino (CL).

5. **Link with the geographical area:**

5.1. *Specificity of the geographical area:*

The production area of 'Ficodindia di San Cono' is characterised by the distribution of the growing areas along an area situated at between 200 and 600 m above sea level, where gentle slopes are separated by small valleys with deep, fresh soils mostly of alluvial origin and of medium consistency, with excellent natural drainage. The soils are mainly sand-based (with a sand percentage of at least 50 %) and on average are pH neutral and subalkaline (pH 6,9-8,1). Most of the terrain is irrigated. There, the experience of the local farmers enables them to manage the plant's water requirements appropriately by taking account of the weather as well as factors linked to the age of the plant, the quantity of fruit present and the altitude of the cactus pears in order to irrigate them as effectively as

possible. The rest of the land for growing is on the higher ground and on the whole benefits from climatic conditions linked to the altitude and from soil conditions linked to the geographic area, making it possible to grow high-quality fruit even without irrigation.

5.2. *Specificity of the product:*

The specificities which characterise 'Ficodindia di San Cono' include the large size of the fruit, its skin's bright rich colours, its subtle aroma and very sweet taste. The size and sweetness of 'Ficodindia di San Cono' compared to fruit from other Sicilian production areas are essential distinguishing features as they are typical of the geographical area.

5.3. *Causal link between the geographical area and the quality or characteristics of the product (for PDO) or a specific quality, the reputation or other characteristic of the product (for PGI):*

The characteristics of 'Ficodindia di San Cono', namely the large size of the fruit, its rich skin colour and sweet-smelling flesh, develop thanks to a perfect combination of environmental and human factors which characterise the production area.

The territory is endowed with special characteristics such as its altitude and topography which are essential features contributing to the particular intensity and quality of the sunlight, the alternating cycles of soaking and drying of the fruit's epicarp and daily temperature range, especially during the fruit's ripening period. Indeed, the territory is characterised by the presence of gentle hills separated by small valleys, is far from the coast and has relatively mild winters. The valleys are totally open from east to west, giving the soils good exposure to sunlight and to easterly winds, thus fostering a mild climate especially in summer-autumn during the fruit's ripening period. In summer and autumn, even during the hottest hours of the day, the hot air is tempered by the regular presence of a westerly and north-westerly breeze in the late morning which ensures that the temperature never reaches excessively high levels.

The physical phenomena described above interact with the exposure to sunlight, accounting for the growth and development of anthocyanins which are responsible for the colour of the epicarp of the cactus pear fruit and of its flesh.

Furthermore, the presence of growing areas at high altitude along with the efficient management by local growers of the water requirements of the irrigated land in this production area result in cactus pears which are heavier and have a higher sugar content than those produced in other geographical areas at lower altitude. The land in this area has a high capacity for retaining humidity for long periods, allowing it to maintain a constant level of humidity and allowing the plant to conclude its production cycle in the best possible conditions, without strain or limitations.

All of these environmental factors combine to give 'Ficodindia di San Cono' its unique quality. These special factors, together with human influence on growing capacity, the perfecting of environmental safeguarding practices and traditional production method (including the preservation of cactus pear growing techniques which respect and protect the hills and valleys) contribute to providing 'Ficodindia di San Cono' with characteristics recognised both in technical and scientific literature and by the fruit's now established market value. The deep roots of the rural population in the production area, its age-old experience, its agricultural skills handed down from generation to generation, continuous research and the use of specific, traditional cultivation methods have created the conditions necessary for the growth of 'Ficodindia di San Cono' until over time it has become what it is today: the historical, traditional and cultural heritage of the whole territory and an essential economic resource.

The traditional 'Sagra del Ficodindia', now in its 25th year, is good evidence of this, and brings together culture, tradition, commercial promotion and technical and scientific updates during an annual festival dedicated to the cactus pear. Its success is due to the full involvement of the local inhabitants in the production process of 'Ficodindia di San Cono' in terms of culture, work and economic activity. This has created a strong link between the product and the environment and, in particular, has built over time a deep emotional link between the local people and the cactus pear. Local producers have both preserved the same growing techniques over the years and, thanks to their considerable experience, are able to identify the ideal time for harvesting. Indeed, premature harvesting would lower the quality of the sugars and would typically give the fruit a 'cladode' flavour which is disliked by consumers, while late harvesting would lead to a deterioration of its organoleptic qualities giving it an unpleasant, rancid flavour. However, if harvested at the ideal time when the fruit has reached its minimum level of skin colouring — which is the best indication of its degree of maturation — the final product has a splendid taste and scent. There is also much history behind the cultivation of cactus pears. In 1840, the French agronomist De Gasparin described the cactus pear as follows during a visit to Sicily: 'It is a blessing and a godsend for Sicily, like the banana tree in tropical countries and the bread tree in the islands of the Pacific ocean ...' The cactus pear finally achieved success and became

intensively cultivated in the mid-1970s: at that time, the San Cono area began to stand out and today its territory, nestled between three large centres (Enna, Caltagirone and Caltanissetta), is the most important specialised production area, described by experts of the sector as 'the capital of cactus pear production in Italy'.

Reference to publication of the specification:

The Ministry launched the national objection procedure with the publication of the proposal for recognising 'Ficodindia di San Cono' PDO in *Official Gazette of the Italian Republic* No 185 of 10 August 2007.

The full text of the product specification is available on the following website:

<http://www.politicheagricole.it/flex/cm/pages/ServeBLOB.php/L/IT/IDPagina/3335>

or

by going direct to the home page of the Ministry of Agricultural, Food and Forestry Policy (<http://www.politicheagricole.it>) and clicking on 'Qualità e sicurezza' (in the top right hand corner of the screen) and then on 'Disciplinari di Produzione all'esame dell'UE'.
