

COUNCIL REGULATION (EEC) No 2081/92

APPLICATION FOR REGISTRATION: Art. 17

PDO (X) PGI ( )

National file No 93/2

1. **Competent service of the Member State:**

Ministère de la Région Wallonne,  
Direction Générale de l'Economie et de l'Emploi,  
Direction de l'Agriculture  
Avenue Prince de Liège, 7  
B-5100 JAMBES (BELGIQUE)  
Tel. (081) 32.12.86  
Fax (081) 30.64.34

2. **Applicant group:**

a) **Name:** Association des négociants en fromage Herve origine  
b) **Address:** rue de Gorhez, 77  
B-4880 AUBEL (Belgique)

c) **Composition:** The association is composed of producers and ripeners.

3. **Name of product:** *Fromage de Herve*

4. **Type of product:** Soft cheese, with washed rind

5. **Specification:**

a) **Name:** Fromage de Herve.

**b) Description:**

*Fromage de Herve* is a soft cheese with washed rind, obtained from untreated or pasteurized cow's milk and manufactured according to the procedures used in the Herve region. It takes the form of a cube or parallelepiped and it has a net weight of 50, 100, 200 or 400 grams.

The internal structure of the cheese is homogeneous, firm, unctuous and its minimum fat content in relation to dry matter is 45%. When cutting a *fromage de Herve*, the cheese under the rind is more unctuous, the taste more mature and the degree of ripeness diminishes towards the centre.

**c) Geographical area:**

The geographical area of production and ripening is bordered in the south by the Vesdre and the Ourthe, in the west by the Meuse, in the north by the Dutch border and in the east by the German border, to the exclusion of the Fourons area, where the production of *Fromages de Herve* has been reduced to a bare minimum.

**d) Evidence:**

*Fromage de Herve* has been produced since the 15th century in the farms of the grassy region located around the town of Herve. *Fromage de Herve* is the result of research conducted at the end of the Middle Ages by stock breeders who wished to preserve surplus milk production until the beginning of winter by fermentation of the traditional "maquée" or "fromage blanc". Under Charles V, there was a ban on wheat exports to the Netherlands and it is in this way that, towards the mid-sixteenth century, the inhabitants of Herve were forced to convert some of their lands into meadows. It is from this time that cheese production diversified, geared to the local market and large-scale exports. Depending on variants which do not basically affect their specific nature, the *fromages de Herve* were known under the names of "remoudous" (double-cream, the recipe for which was specified in 1512), or "quatre saisons", "bizeux", etc.

**e) Acquisition:** (traditional recipe)

- Once the cows have been milked, the jugs of milk are gathered together in a warm place and poured into a vat with slanting sides where the milk is curdled.
- One and a half hours after having added the rennet which provokes the curdling, the curds are cut into four pieces. Fifteen minutes later, the coagulated curdled milk is cut into small pieces the size of a hazel nut.
- Draining: the whey is separated from the curds.

- When the curds are sufficiently coagulated, they are poured between wooden planks to shape the cheese. The strips of cheese thus formed are pressed lightly and turned over after a few hours. They are turned 4 or 5 times per day for two days and finally cut into curd cubes which are reshaped between the planks. The curd cubes are salted and sold a few days later to the ripeners.
- Ripening: in damp cellars, the curd cubes are set out on planks and washed regularly, 2 or 3 times a week during the first fortnight then once a week. Under the action of specific local ferments, the curd cubes are covered with a brown, slightly rosy rind.

**f) Link:**

- **Human factors**

Production and ripening of the cheese is a centuries-old tradition passed on from generation to generation, with mothers explaining the ancestral recipe to their daughters. Each producer has his cows, his pastures and his production secrets which give the cheese a typical bouquet.

The ripening technique enables a cheese to be obtained which is "mature", "mature in the centre" or "uniformly mature", which has the advantage of preventing it caving in at the sides.

- **Natural factors**

1. THE COUNTRY.

The Herve plateau comprises some forty villages and small hamlets scattered amongst orchards planted with apple and pear trees and edged with hedges typical of the region. The climate, the 200 metres altitude and the clayey, chalky soil have a direct impact on the nature of the pastures of the Herve plateau.

## 2. THE MILK.

The composition of the milk (high protein content) and the natural ferments contained in the untreated farm milk used for traditional production are closely related to the nature of the grasses of the region.

### 3. THE CELLARS.

The climate of the ripening cellars of the Herve countryside, sometimes cut into its chalky rock, plays a crucial role: their temperature and humidity promote the development of the ferments which give the ripened cheese a characteristic taste. This microbial flora contains in particular specific local yeasts and bacteria (*Brevibacterium linens*). These micro-organisms are present in the atmosphere, on the cellar walls and in the water used to wash the cheeses and the planks. The seeding of the curd cubes is exclusively natural, without there being any need to use the standardized ferments often used in industrial production. Five to six weeks are necessary for a *fromage de Herve doux* to ripen, two months for a "*piquant*".

#### g) **Control:**

PROMAG ASBL (rue du Carmel, 1 B-6900 MARLOIE), a certifying body, approved by the Région Wallonne since 18 July 1991 to deliver the Walloon quality label, the local designation of origin and the Walloon designation of origin, is responsible for monitoring compliance with the specifications. It is in the process of accreditation EN 45000.

#### h) **Labelling:**

The collective label "*Herve origine*" (Annex 1) made available to all the members of the association is the subject of trade mark protection for Benelux, dated 20 November 1987 (Registry of Trade Marks of The Hague).

The local designation of origin "*Fromage de Herve*" may only be used for cheeses which are produced, manufactured and ripened in the geographical area defined above.

i) **National requirements:**

Legal protection is based on the Ministerial Order of 30 April 1938 introducing arrangements for the official and optional inspection of *fromage de Herve*. While still in force, these rules have largely been overtaken by practical considerations of quality and origin.

Producers and ripeners now comply with the **Rules governing the use and inspection of the designation 'Fromage de Herve' and the collective label 'Herve d'origine'** which define the cheese, the area in which it must be manufactured and its characteristic features such as weight, form, fat content, structure and packaging.

Milk used to manufacture the cheese comes from the defined area, i.e. the plateau de Herve.

---

TO BE COMPLETED BY THE COMMISSION.

EEC No: G/B/0312/940125

Date of receipt of full dossier: 12 March 1996