

AREPO CONTRIBUTION TO THE REVISION OF EU MARKETING STANDARDS

The Association of European Regions for Products of Origin (AREPO) brings together 33 European regions and more than 700 associations of producers for over 50% of European Geographical Indications (GIs). AREPO aims to promote and defend the interests of producers and consumers in European regions committed to promoting quality agri-food products.

AREPO acknowledges that EU Marketing Standards in the agricultural sector are a guarantee of transparency for trade and consumers. As a matter of fact, their implementation is in the interest of both producers and consumers. On the one hand, it helps producers to communicate product characteristics and production method. On the other hand, it provides European consumers with transparent information about the product being marketed.

In addition, they play a key role in preserving and promoting European agricultural know-how, EU culinary heritage and the diversity of production methods. This is particularly true with regards to the **marketing standards for poultry meat, notably foie gras.**

As a result, AREPO welcomes the opening of this public consultation, seizing this opportunity **to urge the European Commission to maintain the definition of raw foie gras as laid down in Regulation No. 543/2008**, wishing to empower consumers to make informed choices and not fall victim to fraudulent practices.

The current definition, setting a minimum weight of 300 grams for duck foie gras and 400 grams for goose foie gras, **ensures the protection of European consumers and allows EU and national authorities to control the product in the internal market, assuring fair competition within the EU and allowing to prevent frauds.** As a matter of fact, reducing the minimum weights of duck and goose livers, might alter the quality of foie gras. Livers weighing less than the standards laid down by the existing EU regulation would not be sufficiently fattened to be tasty and they would not present the uniform colour it requires.¹ Hence, maintaining these weights also prevents the competition from less qualitative products bearing the same sales denominations.

In this respect, AREPO would like to draw attention to the increasing use of the term “foie gras” to designate a wide variety of different types of products, including preparations based on seasoned lean livers, foie gras from cell cultures or vegetable preparations. In the long-term interest of new products, especially of plant origin, and of their manufacturers, **it is important to create specific marketing standards, allowing for the definition of appropriate names and marketing rules.**

AREPO would like to recall as well that the production of foie gras, duck foie gras and fattened goose, especially when covered by a Geographical Indication, contribute to the dynamism of the regional and local agricultural sector, representing a source of employment encompassing also related activities, such as tourism. Bearing this in mind, it is worth considering that reviewing the definition of raw foie gras by reducing the minimum weights of duck and goose livers might also affect the economic conditions for producing and marketing these products. Therefore, **maintaining the current definition of raw foie gras will contribute to keep alive a consistent part of the economic and social tissue of the producing regions.**

To conclude, acknowledging that the aim of the revision of EU Marketing Standards for agricultural products is to take into account sustainability considerations, changing preferences of consumers or

¹ NormoFoie Study, INRA UMR GenPhySE, 2018

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evolving technologies², AREPO would like to remind that, in the European Union, foie gras production, especially under Geographical Indication, is strictly regulated and controlled and farmers have to comply with EU legislation on the protection of farm animals. Consequently, AREPO deems it essential to keep developing the production of PDO/PGI products both by responding to society's new expectations and by encouraging producer groups to integrate more sustainable development criteria as well as to better communicate these actions to consumers.

² Inception impact assessment on the revision of EU marketing standards:
https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/12772-Agricultural-products-revision-of-EU-marketing-standards_en