

Minutes of 6th meeting of the Informal Working Group on Halloumi/Hellim
18 December 2023

The 6th meeting of the Informal Working Group on Halloumi/Hellim (WG) was held on 18 December 2023 in the Home4Cooperation in Nicosia. The meeting was chaired by the Commission services, with the presence of 8 out of 10 members of the WG (see Annex 1).

The meeting started with an introduction of new Co-chair of the Working Group from DG SANTE, Ms. Julie Poirot.

The Working Group adopted the Draft agenda shared in advance of the meeting.

The objective of the meeting was to exchange views on the status of implementation of the Halloumi/Hellim PDO quality scheme and on the role of the WG in that context.

The guest speaker, Mr. Marios Konstantinou, gave a presentation on the *Reflections on the implementation of the Halloumi/Hellim PDO quality scheme in the Greek Cypriot community* (see Annex 2).

In the discussion that followed, different aspects influencing the (future) success of the Halloumi/Hellim PDO quality scheme implementation were addressed. Members shared views on the availability and pricing of the inputs, especially small ruminants' milk, as well as on different circumstances influencing overall marketing and sales. Members reconfirmed that equal standards must apply in both communities.

Members agreed that the WG has contributed to improving relations and information sharing between the two communities.

Members thanked Mr. Björnsson for his dedicated work and highly valued steering and contribution to discussions of the Working Group.

The next meeting of the Working Group is tentatively planned for the first quarter of 2024 and will include a presentation on the requirements for Turkish Cypriot HH producers.

The minutes will be posted on the DG REFORM website.

Annex 1: List of members participating in the 6th meeting of the Informal Working Group on Halloumi/Hellim:

Working Group Members:

- Andrea, Christo
- Andreou, Andreas
- Avunduk, Bekir Meriç
- Ergüven, Mustafa
- Öztürk, Kemal
- Papademas, Photis
- Petrou, Georgios
- Pittas, Yiannos.

Guest speaker:

- Mr. Marios Konstantinou, Cyprus Cheesemakers Association

From the Commission:

- Björnsson, Kjartan, DG REFORM – Chair of meeting
- Cianfoni, Luca, DG AGRI – Co-chair (participating online)
- Poirot, Julie, DG SANTE – Co-chair (participating online)
- Simosas, Stefan, DG REFORM
- Pomoell-Segurola, Jutta, DG REFORM
- Castelló Corvillo, Javier, DG REFORM (participating online)
- Buza-Vidas, Marina, DG REFORM

Annex 2: Presentation by Mr. Marios Konstantinou, Cyprus Cheesemakers Association



Cyprus Cheese Association

18 DECEMBER 2023 – REFORM-HH-
PDO-WG



Vision & Mission

To promote the value of Cyprus Dairy industry throughout the world, to expand Halloumi Exports and to foster a fruitful collaboration between all stakeholders



Our Halloumi Objectives

1. Ensure that the market dynamics exist so the cheese makers can receive all varieties of milk produced in Cyprus without any obsolesces of raw milk
2. Ensure that there is ground for continuous growth on Halloumi exports
3. Sustain the employment levels of the sector



How we commercialized Halloumi over the years

- CYS 195/ 85
- EC Collective trademark/ 1999
- PDO/ September 2022 through the agreement signed 22/7/2022



Halloumi exports have exceeded 41.000 tons in volume in 2022 through consistent initiatives of the CCA members & the Republic of Cyprus

1. Penetrated in new markets and customers through the participation in international fairs and by the private initiatives of our members
2. Launched Halloumi in key accounts in many countries both in the retail and food service sectors
3. Expanded SKUs to satisfy consumer demand (ie Light, Burger, Lactose Free, Block, Chili)
4. Strong support through sampling, promotions, ads, recipes, social media campaigns, websites, etc.



In 2023, Halloumi exports are declining by -10% for specific reasons....

1. Inflation coupled with pressure on the disposable income of consumers following the numerous crises of the last two years (COVID, Ukraine war, Israel war)
2. Intense competition from grilled cheeses produced in EU and in Cyprus
3. The loss of key SKUs following the PDO implementation (Light, flavors, etc).



PDO Amendments applied in the original document

1. 11/7/22: Inclusion of all sheep/ goat breeds
2. 11/7/22: Local ration specs for sheep/ goat
3. 01/09/22: Inclusion of all cow breeds
4. 01/09/22: Local ration specs for cows
5. 14/2/23: Moisture from 46% to 52%
6. 14/2/23: Weight from 150-350gr to <1200gr
7. 14/2/23: Unfolded Halloumi



PDO Amendments applied in the original document

8. 14/2/23: Optional use of pasteurized milk
9. 14/2/23: Optional re-heading at 40C
10. 14/2/23: Ability to add mint during the folding process as well before final packaging. Optional addition of Salt at the folding process
11. 14/2/23: Brining between 8 hours and 3 days
12. 14/2/23: Ability for pasteurizing final packaged product at 72C of the centre of the product for maximum 3 minutes



Pending PDO Amendments

1. Halloumi in round shape (Burger)
2. Lactose Free Halloumi
3. Option in brining in salty water
4. Option in cooking in salty water



Pending PDO Issues

1. Extension of transitional period until 2029
2. Sheep/ Goat milk availability and percentage used
3. If sheep/ goat milk increases at 50% then the annual Halloumi volume will decrease by at least 50%, less than 20.000 tons annual production, with millions of loses from lost sales and Cow milk obsolesces!
4. How do we leverage existing trademarks



Learnings from the PDO Implementation

- 1. Strong Protection within EU from imitations. Still vulnerable to fake Halloumi produced in other countries with CY code**
- 2. Good protection in 3rd countries with room for improvement. GB is the good scenario, Middle East a weak one**
- 3. Consistent quality audits by Bureau Veritas promotes fair competition in the cheese makers industry**
- 4. Minimum benefit derived from consumers and customers**



Thanks for your Attention