

## **Minutes of 7<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Informal Working Group on Halloumi/Hellim 15 May 2024**

The 7<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Informal Working Group on Halloumi/Hellim (WG) was held on 15 May 2024 in the Home4Cooperation in Nicosia. The meeting was chaired by the Commission services, in the presence of 8 out of the 10 members of the WG (see Annex 1). DG AGRI joined the meeting on-line.

The meeting started with an introduction of the new Co-Chair of the WG from DG REFORM, Ms. Jutta Pomoell-Seguroła.

The Working Group adopted the updated draft agenda of the meeting.

The objective of the meeting was to exchange views on the status of implementation of the Halloumi/Hellim Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) quality scheme, focusing in particular on its implementation in the Turkish Cypriot community. In addition, the meeting discussed the forthcoming Call for Applications for the selection of a new, second assembly of the Informal Working Group on Halloumi/Hellim for the period July 2024-July 2026. Members had the opportunity to provide recommendations as to how to structure the selection process. Current members were encouraged apply to continue their participation in the WG if relevant.

WG member Mr. Bekir Meriç Avunduk gave a presentation on the *Reflections on the implementation of the Halloumi/Hellim PDO quality scheme in the Turkish Cypriot community* (see Annex 2).

The discussion centred mostly on concerns shared by both communities in the implementation of the PDO scheme, including the availability of relevant quantities of small ruminants' milk and the competition to PDO Halloumi/Hellim offered by grilled cheese, as well as counterfeits products. Members welcomed suggestions that would strengthen the inclusiveness of processes aiming to amend the PDO product specifications including the stipulated milk ratios. In this context, the proposal to focus on the dry matter when determining whether the expected milk ratios were achieved was repeated.

DG AGRI clarified that the new Regulation 224/1143 of 11 April 2024<sup>1</sup> that entered into force on 13 May 2024 offers a time-bound opportunity for the extension of the transitional period currently in place for the milk ratios in PDO Halloumi/Hellim. Various strategies to deal with counterfeit PDO products, depending on their country of origin, were outlined.

It was reconfirmed that equal standards must apply in both communities when trading the PDO product. The possibility for WG members to cooperate and implement joint actions addressing their common challenges in a logic of partnership to safeguard this Cyprus heritage cheese was highlighted and discussed.

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<sup>1</sup> Regulation (EU) 2024/1143 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 April 2024 on geographical indications for wine, spirit drinks and agricultural products, as well as traditional specialities guaranteed and optional quality terms for agricultural products, amending Regulations (EU) No 1308/2013, (EU) 2019/787 and (EU) 2019/1753 and repealing Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012

Members shared their suggestions concerning the criteria and process to be applied under the next Call for Applications for the selection of new, second assembly of the WG.

Ms. Pomoell-Segurola thanked members for their valuable contributions and cooperation in the first assembly of the WG, inviting them to consider reapplying if relevant.

The next meeting of the Working Group is tentatively planned for the third quarter of 2024.

The minutes will be posted on the DG REFORM website.

**Annex 1: List of members participating in the 7<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Informal Working Group on Halloumi/Hellim:**

*Working Group Members:*

- Andrea, Christo
- Andreou, Andreas
- Avunduk, Bekir Meriç
- Erel, Metehan
- Ergüven, Mustafa
- Öztürk, Kemal
- Petrou, Georgios
- Pittas, Yiannos

*From the Commission:*

- Pomoell-Segurola, Jutta, DG REFORM – Chair of meeting
- Cianfoni, Luca, DG AGRI – Co-chair (participating online)
- Karampella, Theodora, DG AGRI – (participating online)
- Buza-Vidas, Marina, DG REFORM

# Turkish Cypriot Cheese Manufacturers Union

May, 2024



## About us

- Union has 80 members.
- 8 producers are actively exporting.
- Main export countries: **Turkey and Gulf countries** such as; Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Jordan etc.
- Main export items: **Hellim / Halloumi, Kashaval cheese.**
- Factories have worldwide known quality certificates such as; **BRC, HACCP, ISO** etc.

## About Dairy Industry

- Growth of dairy industry by 31% achieved in past 10 years.
- This growth achieved by hard work of all the stakeholders in the industry.
- Our factories are supplying their products to world-wide known supermarkets & foodservice brands.
- There are 5000 animal farm owners in TCc.
- Appx 54,000 people in TCc directly / indirectly connected to the industry.
- Animal diseases within the farms are almost zero.

## Objectives of our Union

- Keep employment level and increase over the years.
- Increase the total production of cow & goat and sheep milk hence cheese production
- Increase export level to generate income from outside of the Cyprus.
- Work in parallel with all stakeholders to bring benefit to appx 54000 people.

## **Challenges that our industry is being facing:**

- Ambargos that are preventing us to export our products to any other countries than Turkey and Gulf countries.
- Due to limited market access availability, we are obliged to sell based on our customers target prices.
- Hence, low profitability.
- Due to ambargos again, we are not able to import our machineries or side materials directly from producers all around the world.
- Hence, high cost and time consuming.

## **PDO in Turkish Cypriot side:**

- PDO officially launched in EU April 2021.
- Majority of Greek Cypriot cheese producers completed all application & audit within one year.
- PDO application and audit launched in TCc Side in **2023**.
- Three companies applied & qualified with PDO in 2023.

## Problems with PDO.

- However, untill now companies are not able sell **one kg** of their product either to GCc or EU member countries.
- Procedures are not clearly being set how to sell to EU or GCc.
- Meanwhile, Greek Cypriot producers are actively selling their cheeses to EU and worldwide.
- Motivation and belief of our members to apply PDO declining steadily.

Thank you for  
listening.

