

Minutes of 10th meeting of the Informal Working Group on Halloumi/Hellim **26 September 2025**

The 10th meeting of the Informal Working Group on Halloumi/Hellim, i.e. the third meeting of its second assembly, was held on 26 September 2025 in the Home4Cooperation in Nicosia. The meeting was co-chaired in person by DG REGIO and DG AGRI in the presence of eight members of the Working Group and two observers from Sustainable Food Systems Ireland. Relevant Commission services participated in person and on-line in the meeting.

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

The discussion centred on the sharing of experiences and prospects in the implementation of the Halloumi/Hellim PDO scheme, focusing in particular on the sustainability of the scheme after the end of the transitional period in mid-2029 when existing derogations to milk ratios are to expire.

Members reiterated the significant economic importance of Halloumi/Hellim trade to Cyprus' economy and the benefits that the PDO scheme have provided in this regard. Several members raised the need for urgent changes to the product specification for the PDO scheme to be preserved post-2029, especially considering the availability of sheep and goat milk on the island, current Halloumi/Hellim PDO production volumes and the expectations and demand for further growth. Clear information and communication channels as to possible ways forward for the scheme, involving all relevant stakeholders, were called for. The lack of full participation of Turkish Cypriot producers in the bi-communal PDO scheme, given the lack of public health and animal inspections by an appointed delegated body, was acknowledged as a serious concern, impacting the overall scheme. All members expressed the willingness and need for a roadmap to preserve the bi-communal PDO scheme.

The Commission emphasised that any change to the PDO product specifications needs to be well justified in light of the original recipe and amendments submitted timely, taken into account the relevant procedures including at Union level. Given the bi-communal design of the scheme, the views of all relevant stakeholders should be taken into account in the process. The Commission reminded members that also temporary amendments need to be shared with the Commission to allow their publication; this makes the amendments enforceable in the EU.

Members concluded that if the milk percentage is to be adjusted the process should be started soon because it takes time. It would be good if an application is submitted to the Commission before summer 2026. This would allow for the amendment procedure to be concluded before the expiry of the transitional period. In this perspective, consultations and common work among all stakeholders should take place before the end of the year. Members expressed their dedication to collaborate with the view to finding sustainable solutions for the benefit of both communities.

Ms. Pomoell-Segurola (DG REGIO) and Mr. Onofre (DG AGRI) thanked members for their valuable contributions and cooperation.

The next meeting of the Working Group was tentatively announced for the end of 2025 or early 2026. The minutes will be posted on the Commission's website.

Annex 1: List of members participating in the 8th meeting of the Informal Working Group on Halloumi/Hellim:

Working Group Members:

- Alexandrou, Nasia
- Andrea, Christo
- Andreou, Andreas
- Avunduk, Bekir Meriç
- Ergüven, Mustafa
- Konstantinou, Marios
- Öztürk, Kemal
- Papademas, Photis

From the Commission:

- Pomoell-Segurola, Jutta, DG REGIO – Co-chair of meeting
- Onofre, Joao, DG AGRI – Co-chair of meeting
- Cianfoni, Luca, DG AGRI
- Karampella, Theodora, DG AGRI (participating online)
- Bloemendal, Jan, DG SANTE (participating online)
- Castelló Corvillo, Javier, DG REGIO
- Buza-Vidas, Marina, DG REGIO

Observers:

- Barry, Michael, Sustainable Food Systems Ireland
- Parker, Michael, Sustainable Food Systems Ireland

