

WRITTEN QUESTION P-3871/07
by Giuseppe Castiglione (PPE-DE)
to the Commission

Subject: Protection of hand-harvested sea salt

Hand-harvested sea salt (which differs from table salt by virtue of its composition and hence the trace elements which it contains) is a foodstuff which, despite its uniform appearance, has properties which vary according to place of origin and production method. This creates a connection between a salt's place of origin and its inherent organoleptic qualities. This particular link between an agricultural product or a foodstuff and its place of production is protected under Community law by means of Regulation (EC) No 510/2006¹ on the protection of geographical indications and designations of origin for agricultural products and foodstuffs.

Pursuant to Article 1(1) of that Regulation, the rules laid down in the Regulation govern the protection of designations of origin and geographical indications for agricultural products listed in Annex I to the Treaty and for foodstuffs listed in Annex I to the Regulation and for agricultural products listed in Annex II to the Regulation.

It follows from the wording of the Regulation (which always refers to 'agricultural products or food stuffs') that two different categories of product - agricultural products and foodstuffs - are entitled to protection, irrespective of whether foodstuffs are accessory to or derived from agricultural products. Furthermore, natural mineral waters and spring waters were listed for over 10 years in Annex I to Regulation (EEC) No 2081/92² (which has now been replaced by Regulation (EC) No 510/2006) and were registered at Community level; they were subsequently deleted solely for the sake of convenience and not for legal reasons (see Regulation (EC) No 692/2003³). Hence the view must be taken that hand-harvested sea salt may also be entitled to the specific protection granted under Regulation (EC) No 510/2006, since (a) it constitutes a foodstuff and (b) it has organoleptic characteristics which differentiate it according to place and method of production.

In the light of the above considerations, does the Commission not think that the foodstuff in question should qualify for a designation of origin or a geographical indication and be included in the list contained in Annex I to Regulation (EC) No 510/2006? In view of the request to that effect which has been submitted by Europe's producers of hand-harvested sea-salt and whereas pursuant to the third paragraph of Article 1(1) of Regulation (EC) No 510/2006, amendments may be made to Annexes I and II of the Regulation (Article 15(2)), when is the Commission intending to submit to the Standing Committee on protected geographical indications and designations of origin a proposal for an amendment which will enable hand-harvested sea salt to be included in Annex I of the above-mentioned Regulation?

¹ OJ L 93, 31.3.2006, p. 12

² OJ L 208, 24.7.1992, p. 1

³ OJ L 99, 17.4.2003, p. 1