

Publication of an application for registration pursuant to Article 6(2) of Regulation (EEC) No 2081/92 on the protection of geographical indications and designations of origin

(2003/C 277/09)

This publication confers the right to object to the application pursuant to Articles 7 and 12d of the abovementioned Regulation. Any objection to this application must be submitted via the competent authority in a Member State, in a WTO member country or in a third country recognised in accordance with Article 12(3) within a time limit of six months from the date of this publication. The arguments for publication are set out below, in particular under 4.6, and are considered to justify the application within the meaning of Regulation (EEC) No 2081/92.

COUNCIL REGULATION (EEC) No 2081/92

APPLICATION FOR REGISTRATION: ARTICLE 5

PDO (x) PGI ()

National application No: 7/2002

1. Responsible department in the Member State

Name: Ministero delle Politiche agricole e forestali

Address: Via XX Settembre, 20 — I-00187 Roma

Tel. (39-06) 481 99 68

Fax (39-06) 42 01 31 26

E-mail: qualita@politicheagricole.it

2. Applicant group

2.1. Name: Associazione 'Cultori della Nocellara del Belice'

2.2. Address: Via Ugo Bassi, 12 — I-91022 Castelvetrano (TP)

2.3. Composition: producer/processor (x) other ()

3. Type of product: Category 1.5, extra virgin olive oil

4. Specification

(summary of requirements under Article 4(2))

4.1. Name: 'Valle del Belice'

4.2. Description: extra virgin olive oil of the following chemical and organoleptic characteristics:

— maximum acidity 0,5 %

— panel test score ≥ 7

— peroxides ≤ 12 meqO₂/kg

— polyphenols ≥ 100 ppm

— colour: green to yellow with pale green highlights

- odour: olive fruit from unripe to ripe
- taste: fruity from medium to intense; mildly to intensely bitter; mildly to intensely pungent

- 4.3. *Geographical area:* The production zone for the Valle del Belice protected designation of origin is the territory of the communes of Castelvetrano, Campobello di Mazara, Partanna, Poggioreale, Salaparuta and Santa Ninfa, located in Trapani Province, Sicily Region. The zone is defined in the production specification.
- 4.4. *Proof of origin:* Agriculture and food production is the main economic resource of the Valle del Belice and the olive has been grown since the history of its people began. The arrival of the first inhabitants is to be linked to the foundation of Selinunte from Megara in the 7th century BC as a colony in Magna Graecia. In ancient Selinunte the olive was, given the manifold uses of its oil, a symbol of peace, wisdom and prosperity. Its people grew and propagated the olive, settling the valleys and other fertile land of the interior: that they produced oil is shown by the crushing equipment for olives dating back to the 5th century BC found near Temple E. As Pliny relates, Selinunte became a nodal point in the trade of Magna Graecia and the Mediterranean thanks to its powerful commercial fleet and the foodstuffs involved, wine, cereals and oil. The olive remained the primary crop of the Valle del Belice. It was the characteristic crop on the 17th century estates and historical research shows intensive cultivation in the 18th century. All this demonstrates the historical tradition behind olive cultivation in the zone. It is understood from the grafting technique adopted that varietal selection was already a feature in the 18th century, presumably involving the Nocellara del Belice cultivar, already present in the zone and extensively cultivated at the present time.

The presence of the Belice river, an element of continuity throughout history, and the area's physical geography and climate, permitting settlement of the ancient population in its valleys, have meant that the entire Valle del Belice area has always enjoyed a distinctive character indissolubly linked to the growing of this particular olive cultivar.

Growing, processing and bottling all take place within the delimited zone. Bottling has been confined it because of the need to safeguard the particular characteristics and the quality of Valle del Belice oil by ensuring that the inspection carried out by the third party organisation is itself monitored by the producers, to whom the protected designation of origin is of decisive importance, offering as it does in line with the purposes of the Regulation an opportunity of supplementing their incomes. Moreover, bottling has traditionally been done in the delimited geographical zone.

The olives come from groves located in the production zone. The growers enter their own groves in a correctly run and updated register. Oil extraction, conditioning and bottling are carried out within the delimited zone at establishments deemed to be of appropriate standard and also listed in a register. The inspection structure checks that the requirements of the production specification for entry on the registers are met and also that the various links in the production chain fulfil their obligations for the purpose of ensuring product traceability.

- 4.5. *Method of production:* Valle del Belice extra virgin olive oil is produced from olives harvested, from October onwards but not after the end of the year. These are primarily of the variety Nocellara del Belice, which has a minimum presence of 70 % in the traditional plantations. Use can also be made of other varieties grown in the production zone such as Ogliarola Messinese, Biancolilla, Cerasuola, Giaraffa, Buscionetto and Santagatese, which are present in varying percentages but neither individually nor in combination exceed 30 % of the trees in plantations. In the plantations in production the traditional cultivation care is given: mechanical tillage, manure/fertiliser application, phytosanitary attention of the integrated or organic type, annual spur pruning, irrigation and/or fertirrigation in irrigated areas.

Olive production may not exceed 10 000 kg/ha in the specialised groves in crop years. Maximum oil yield is 23 %.

The olives are picked by hand and/or with the aid of tools. Machines can be used provided that any contact of the fruit with the ground is avoided. The use of abscission products is prohibited. Until they are crushed, which must be within two days of being picked, the olives have to be kept in a cool ventilated place. They may not be transported or stored in bags of any type of material.

Valle del Belice extra virgin olive oil is extracted exclusively by mechanical means. Before crushing the leaves are removed and the olives thoroughly washed, both by machine. The temperature of the pulp being worked must not exceed 30 °C. The oil must be kept in places where constant temperature can be maintained and in containers protected from air and light.

- 4.6. *Link*: The defined zone is strongly homogeneous in its soil and weather conditions. The presence of the sea and of the Belice river softens the climate, creating favourable conditions for growing olives. The microclimate to be found in the zone is a Mediterranean weather system characterised by mild winters and hot summers. The maximum temperatures, often above 32 °C, occur in July and August and average minimum temperature during that period is 24 °C. In the winter months the temperature rarely drops below 0 °C. Rainfall is irregularly distributed and concentrated in a few months, mainly in autumn and winter. The Valle del Belice undergoes a good five months of drought. Recorded rainfall is 500 to 700 mm/year. There are persistent fairly strong winds. The common feature of the area's soil structures is the presence of brown soils leached to a greater or lesser extent. These are associated with red soils in the littoral areas and with vertisols, regosols and lithosols in the interior. These conditions permitted over time development in the zone of an indigenous cultivar that is particularly widespread. It is the strong link between the Nocellara del Belice cultivar, the soil and the specific climate of the Valle del Belice that allows its qualitative and quantitative potential to be achieved in these surroundings but not elsewhere. The local growers have over time developed cultivation techniques (pruning, protection, manuring/fertilising, irrigation and harvesting), that are more akin to those for growing fruit than to the traditional techniques for olives, that upgrade the quality of the fruit of this double aptitude cultivar. A highly prized oil is thus obtained, noted for its low acidity, excellent keeping quality and pronounced aromatic note.

4.7. *Inspection body*

Name: Agroqualità Società a r.l.

Address: Piazza Sallustio, 21 — I-00187 Roma

4.8. *Labelling*: Olio extra vergine di oliva 'Valle del Belice' Denominazione di Origine Protetta

The designated name must appear on the label in clear indelible letters of a colour sharply contrasting with that of the label itself. It must be clearly distinguished from the set of indications appearing above it.

The oil must be released for consumption in containers holding not more than five litres.

4.9. *National requirements*: —

EC No: IT/00258/2002.11.04.

Date of receipt of full application: 4 November 2002.
