

# IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EU OPTIONAL QUALITY TERM “MOUNTAIN PRODUCT” WHERE DO WE STAND IN THE DIFFERENT MEMBER STATES?



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# INTRODUCTION

Rewarding [15 years of Euromontana commitment to the topic of mountain products](#), the use of the optional quality term (OQT) “mountain product” was protected in November 2012 by the European Union with the (EU) [regulation No 1151/2012](#). Following that, the European Commission adopted the delegated act (EU) [No 665/2014 in June 2014](#). Since then, several countries have moved forward with the implementation of the OQT at national level. The delegated act gave some room for manoeuvre to Member States (MS) in the implementation of the term. Euromontana has monitored this process in seventeen countries so far.

This study was first published in early 2016 and was updated at the beginning of 2017, then in November 2017 to take into account the feedback of the conference on “[How to better valorise mountain food products? Launch of the European Charter for Mountain Quality Food Products](#)” organised on 18 October 2017 by Euromontana. It was updated in January 2019 and this is the 4<sup>th</sup> update (May 2020) to take into account the recent developments, in particular in Bulgaria, Croatia and Romania.

We hope that by knowing more about how the OQT is implemented in different countries, those still lagging behind will get inspired and will finally implement this tool to further encourage a better valorisation of mountain products.

We would also like to thank all our contacts in the different Member States who are regularly updating us on the situations in the different Member States, this study relies on their inputs. If you have further information on one country, do not hesitate to [contact Euromontana](#).

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As a reminder, MS have the possibility to adjust the derogation on the processing outside mountain areas. While in the delegated act a distance of 30 km is allowed for the production of milk and milk products, slaughtering of animals and cutting and deboning of carcasses, and pressing of olive oil, MS can decide to reduce this distance or have no derogation on the distance<sup>1</sup>.

In addition, in order to avoid the fraudulent use of the OQT “mountain product”, MS have to set up a control scheme to monitor the use of the OQT. This means that they have to define the procedures for the farmers using the OQT and they have to appoint an organisation responsible for controlling the use of the term<sup>2</sup>.

Up to now,, there are three types of Member States: the ones which will directly apply the EU regulation (Austria), the ones which are in the process of adapting their national laws to the EU regulation (France, Germany, Italy, Romania, Slovenia, Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Croatia) and those which did not yet adapt their national laws (Portugal, Spain, UK/Scotland, Greece, Cyprus, Slovakia, Poland, Finland and Sweden).

## Implementation of the Optional Quality Term "Mountain Product" in 2020



<sup>1</sup> Extract from article 6 of regulation (EU) No 665/2014: “As regards products processed on their territory, Member States may determine that the derogation in paragraph 1, point (a) [i.e. processing operations for the production of milk and milk products in processing facilities in place on 3 January 2013] will not apply or that the processing facilities must be located within a distance, to be specified, of less than 30 km from the mountain area in question.”

<sup>2</sup> Extract from Article 34 of regulation (EU) No 1151/2012: “Member States shall undertake checks, based on a risk analysis, to ensure compliance with the requirements of this Title and, in the event of breach, shall apply appropriate administrative penalties”.



**COUNTRIES DIRECTLY APPLYING THE EU  
REGULATION WITHOUT A SPECIFIC  
NATIONAL ADAPTATION**

## AUSTRIA

With 73.4% of its territory covered in mountains and 54.7% of its utilised agricultural area (UAA) in the mountains<sup>3</sup>, the production of mountain products in Austria represents a large part of the country's total farming output (38.1%<sup>4</sup>).

**Adaptation process at national level:** No specific legislation will be adopted at the national level and so the derogation will not be redefined. The regulation has been applied as stated in the EU regulation, *“processing outside mountain areas will be allowed provided that the distance from the mountain area in question does not exceed 30 km”*.



**Procedure for authorisation of use:** No specific pre-authorisation is required. Farmers can directly use the OQT, as long as they are respecting the criteria. They are not obliged to be registered on any list.

**Control system against fraud:** After tough negotiations, an official control system has been agreed between the different Ministries. The Ministry of Health will take over the job of controlling and monitoring the food that reaches store shelves under the provisions foreseen in art. 7 of the FIC regulation (prevention of misleading the final consumer).

<sup>3</sup> All figures on the proportion of a country covered in mountains and on the UAA come from the JRC publication: Santini et al. (2013). Labelling of agricultural and food products of mountain farming. Joint Research Centre. European Commission. Available from: [http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/sites/agriculture/files/external-studies/2013/mountain-farming/fulltext\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/sites/agriculture/files/external-studies/2013/mountain-farming/fulltext_en.pdf), page 19.

The Ministry of Agriculture will take over the implementation of the requirements of the regulation 665/2014 in the field.

To facilitate the development of a control system, which appears as the main reason to delay the implementation of the OQT in different countries, the Austrian Chamber of Agriculture and AMA (the Austrian Federal Marketing Agency) have developed together with the Bavarian Ministry of Agriculture and the government of South Tyrol, a manual focused on the requirements for feed stuff in order for a product to be considered a mountain product. These requirements were developed with the assistance of feeding specialists from Italy, Austria, and Germany and are based on a pragmatic correlation between the number of cow-heads per hectare and the relationship between green biomass and feed stuff intake.

**Rules on the format used:** AMA is developing a special logo to communicate the mountain message to the consumer. The logo contains the term “mountain product”. The control of the use of the logo will be based on a private certification scheme which complies with the official EU requirements.



[http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/external-studies/2013/mountain-farming/fulltext\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/external-studies/2013/mountain-farming/fulltext_en.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> All figures on the proportion of a country's agricultural activity that occurs in mountains comes from the JRC report cited above, pages 26 - 27.

### Producers' uptake of the OQT

**General use:** While there is interest in the use of the term, in early 2019, it seems that there was not a lot of concrete use in practice. In Austria, the term is most likely to be used for dairy, beef, lamb and fruit and vegetables.

#### To go further on the producers' uptake:

In early 2016, the Austrian Chamber of Agriculture started a national service association called the SVGH ("Serviceverein Geschützte Bezeichnungen für Lebensmittel", [www.svggh.at](http://www.svggh.at)) for all types of quality terms (Geographical Indications + OQT).

This association is publicly funded through a Rural Development measure (from measure 16, cooperation) and will hopefully be able to assist farmers who wish to use the mountain product term. The association helps members with judicial and administrative issues, protection of intellectual property, and marketing and promotion while also helping those interested in using the term complete their applications. The association also serves as a contact point for authorities and an indirect way for the involved ministries to coordinate their work.

In 2019, there are on-going talks about a category of food from mountain pastures based on the EU definition of mountain product, but more restricted concerning the area of provenance and the time of the year, where such products are available. We did not receive any update in 2020.

In 2018 there was a private initiative from the biggest dairy cooperative with a fresh milk in glass bottles (single use), with natural fat content, and the labelling of "Almmilch" which was a big success and surprise to the cooperative (they were sold out), although the consumer price was 1,49 €/litre. So based on this positive practical experience, it should be possible to assure the mountain pasture quality by a specific module of the national quality seal. Based on the specific guidelines a logo shall be developed.

For mountain products as such the strategic vision is to use it for exportation, but there are further talks necessary as many exporters argue that they have no difficulty to communicate the mountainous origin of their products without the official definition.

In general, one of the main worries is the use of fancy names for products which are abusively using the mountain term or pictures without applying the necessary criteria.





**COUNTRIES THAT HAVE ADAPTED OR ARE  
IN THE PROCESS OF ADAPTING THE  
OPTIONAL QUALITY TERM REGULATION  
AT NATIONAL LEVEL**



## FRANCE

Mountain areas represent 23.1% of the French territory and 14.5% of the UAA is in mountains. France accounts for 18.3%<sup>5</sup> of the EU mountain food production. The production of mountain products in France represents 8.5% of the country's total farming output representing 4265 million€<sup>6</sup>. France and Italy are the two EU countries that already had a law regulating the use of the term 'mountain'. Therefore, since the adoption of the EU regulations, these laws have had to be revised.

**Adaptation process at national level:** On 7 October 2015, the French Ministry of Agriculture released the [ordinance n°2015-1246 on signs for the indication of quality and origin](#). It introduced two distinct cases:

- For the food products mentioned in the [Annex I of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union](#) as stated in the article 31 of the regulation (EU) N°1151/2012, the EU OQT "mountain product" should be used.
- For drinks and other non-food agricultural products (like [water for example](#)) that are not subject to the EU regulations and that were included in the previous French regulation, the national term 'mountain' is maintained.

In France, the [technical instruction DGPAAT/SDOE/2014-579](#) detailed the application of the EU and national terms.

**Derogation on distance of processing:** France did not make use of the possibility to reduce the distance of processing outside mountain areas.

**Procedure for authorisation of use:** For both the EU term and the national term, producers will no longer need an authorisation before making use of these terms (as it was the case under the previous national legislation). Nonetheless, they are encouraged to inform the DRAAF (Regional Direction in charge of

Agriculture, Food and Forestry in each French region) that they are using the term.

**Control system against fraud:** The control will be realised by the competent administrative authorities (DGCCRF: Directorate-General for Competition, Consumer Affairs and Fraud Control) at local level.

**Rules on the format used:** If the OQT appears on product packaging, there is no requirement on the format of the term.



**Producers' uptake of the OQT:** many French products were already using the previous French term and are now using the EU OQT. Nonetheless, the absence of national register makes more complicated to have a full picture of the number of producers and the number of products using it.

**To go further on the producers' uptake:** Mont Lait for milk products and Origine montagne for pork products (detailed below) are two concrete cases on the implementation of the OQT managed collectively where producers play a key role in the implementation of the OQT.

<sup>5</sup> All figures on the share of the country mountain output versus the total mountain output in the EU come from the JRC report cited above, page 26

<sup>6</sup> All figures on the mountain output per country come from the JRC report cited above, page 27

## Mont Lait brand

[Mont Lait](#) benefits from the OQT mountain product, which means that it comes exclusively from holdings located in mountain areas which themselves produce more than 60 % of the herd's feed. The processing companies producing Mont Lait products are also located in this mountain area.

In 2010, a group of breeders from the Massif Central created the Association of Mountain Milk Producers (APLM), owner of the Mont Lait brand, a 100% producer brand. This association has made it possible to develop a balanced partnership between producers and processors to build a product (from the raw material to the finished product) but also to raise awareness among the general public of the challenges of maintaining this sector in the mountains (social, economic or environmental).



While the Mont Lait brand aims at generating added value through the OQT mountain products, APLM manages the redistribution of the financial return to producers by collecting 0.10 € per litre of milk sold. Out of this added value, APLM returns 0.03 € per litre to the companies that manufacture Mont Lait products, as compensation for the additional costs of collection in mountain areas.

Each tray (400 grams) of Mont Lait raclette sold generates 0.36 € for the benefit of the Mountain Milk Producers Association.

Each block (250 grams) of Mont Lait butter sold generates 0.55 € for the benefit of the Mountain Milk Producers Association.

The Mont Lait approach therefore supports the whole mountain dairy sector and is part of a model of social economy.

The Mont Lait approach wishes to go even further. By January 2021, the producers wish to clarify the specifications once again by ensuring in particular that at least 70% of the dairy herd's feed consists of grass and that the dairy cows must go outside (having at least 20 acres of pasture per cow from 1 March to 31 October).

## Origine Montagne

The "[Origine Montagne](#)" (mountain origin) brand was created by the [Association Porc Montagne](#) (pork mountain association) to promote professionals of the mountain pork industry.

The approach complies with a rigorous charter and aims to guarantee the quality, authenticity, and origin of mountain pork products. It aims at guiding consumers towards 100% guaranteed mountain products of mountain origin that respect the products, the people and the territory. As part of the Origine Montagne approach, only pigs reared in French mountain areas and the charcuterie made with them can benefit from the Origine Montagne designation. Thus, they all benefit from the OQT mountain product. But the Origine Montagne approach goes even further.



Indeed, the approach responds to a charter based on 3 criteria: respect for the products (respect for good agricultural practices in

addition to products benefiting from the OQT mountain product), for people (support for local employment, fair remuneration for all those involved) and for the mountain territory (raising awareness of sustainable practices, promotion and enhancement of the mountain territory).

Today, Origine Montagne brings together 120 farmers, 4 slaughterhouses (cutters), 6 cured meat and sausage companies, 2 meat and meat product packers in France.

The products manufactured include fresh meats, charcuterie, ready-made meals and canned food.

## GERMANY

2.4% of the German territory is covered in mountains and 1.8% of the German UAA is in mountains. But the production of mountain products in Germany still accounts for 3.6% of the country's farming activity. 460K ha agricultural production is in mountainous areas, which represents 14.4% of the Bavarian UAA.

**Adaptation process at national level:** The Federal Government adapted the (Lebensmittelspezialitätengesetz) Food Specialties Act to the EU legislation in order to integrate the OQT into the federal legislation (entered into force in January 2016). At present there is no additional national regulation on mountain products in Germany.

**Derogation on distance of processing:** The German government decided not to redefine the derogation, so that processing operations in Germany may take place outside mountain areas, *“provided that the distance from the mountain area in question does not exceed 30 km”*.

**Procedure for authorisation of use:** Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012 and Delegate Regulation (EU) No. 665/2014 should apply directly and there is no other authorisation specifically required.

**Control system against fraud:** In case of using the OQT, the existing authority in charge of controlling foodstuffs matters will monitor the cases of misuse and will apply appropriate administrative penalties. Various authorities will be in charge at Bundesland level or local level.

**Producers' uptake of the OQT:** Some Bavarian processing companies started to offer a price premium for milk produced in mountain areas (+1cts/l) in November 2015. But as such, the term “mountain product” does not seem to be used in Germany.



## ITALY

Mountains cover 47.5% of the Italian territory. With 33.8% of its UAA in mountain areas and producing 30.8% of EU mountain food production, Italy is the biggest producer of EU mountain products (M€ 7 195). The production of mountain products in Italy represents 17.4% of the country's farming activity.

**Adaptation process at national level:** A decree “Regolamento comunitario” has been adopted on 26 July 2017 (published to the Official Journal of 13 September 2017) to adapt the EU regulation for application at the national level. The Italian choice relies on the strong involvement of the regions in

monitoring and controlling the application of the use of the optional quality term. National guidelines on the controls have been adopted by the [National Decree of 20 July 2018](#). A national logo has been adopted by a national decree on 2 August 2018.



**Derogation on distance of processing:** After long discussion, Italy has finally chosen to apply a 10km derogation for the production of milk and milk products, thus reducing the 30km possibility given by the EU regulation: this measure helps maintaining the benefit to mountain areas. Indeed, in Italy the distance of 30 km means that large cities like Torino or Milan could have benefited from the scheme if the distance of processing was not reduced. The reduction of distance allows many small plants processing milk and dairy to benefit from the scheme and to keep the added value in mountain areas.

This reduction of the derogation does not apply for meat and olive oil for which the 30 km derogation is in place.

If a plant needs derogation for processing, regional authorities must be further notified.

**Procedure for authorisation of use:** Farmers are entitled to use the term once they have notified the regional authorities about their intention to enter into the system and to label the product with the optional quality scheme. Farmers are thus entered in the regional database. Each regional authority has to communicate this list of producers once a year to the [national Ministry of Agriculture](#).

**Control system against fraud:** Regarding the control systems, the current challenge lies in agreeing upon the best way to efficiently

implement and control the OQT without causing additional bureaucratic burdens for the producers that would keep them from using the term.

Regional bodies want to make the regulation attractive for producers and to offer them an alternative tool that is simpler to use than the Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) and Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) for the promotion of their products. Controls have been put in place at the market level meaning that producers would be controlled only after they have started to use the term. With the Italian legislation on traceability of food products, the competent control authorities would be able to trace back the products to the processing and production sites.

**Next steps:** Each region must set a list of mountain operators to be published online by the region itself and the ministry as well and update it every 6 months (see national website). Thus, every region has its own list of producers.

In December 2019, the Italian Ministry of Agriculture sent a survey to all the operators included in the regional lists, asking users of the OQT mountain products to respond regarding their experience and results. The results of the survey are not available yet.

Nonetheless, according to Laura Ronchi, from the Lombardy Region, a persistent problem remains the coexistence on the market of products labelled with the OQT “mountain product” with the national logo on the one hand, and products generally labelled as “from mountains” on the other hand. Consumers don’t really understand the differences between the two levels of guarantee: the first scheme is based on regulated requirements, public and open to all the operators, the other one has only general requirements controlled by a private entity, thus this keeps unfair competition between producers and confusion for consumers. It would be advisable to issue a strong campaign using promotion funds at the national and EU level (using for example television or social networks) to inform consumers that the OQT “mountain product” must comply with requirements laid down by

an European regulation, and is guaranteed by a regulation on labelling that gives responsibility to the operators and is controlled by national public authorities. The more consumers are aware that the OQT helps mountain agriculture and communities to preserve alpine and mountain areas, the more the market will recognize a better price to farmers for their products.

Another difficulty remains the capacity to comply with the requirements on animal feeding, especially for small producers.

This explains the slow uptake of the use of OQT in several regions and this is the reason why ERSAF (regional agency for food and agriculture in Lombardy) plans to launch a pilot project in Lombardy in 2020 to help creating new feedstuffs supply chains especially for transhumant animals (see more details in paragraph “to go further”).

**Producers’ uptake of the OQT:** The total number of producers registered in the different regional databases is 615. The repartition per region is the following:

#### PIEMONTE

**214** producers: mainly fresh and processed meat products, fruits, vegetables and unprocessed cereals but also milk and dairy products and, to a lesser extent, honey

#### EMILIE ROMAGNA

**88** producers: mainly Parmigiano Reggiano cheese but also quite a lot of honey and even 6 producers of saffron

#### ABRUZZO

**49** producers: mainly potatoes and fruits

#### VENETO

**29** producers: fruits and cereals; meat, milk and dairy products, honey

#### VALLE D’AOSTA

**10** producers: milk, apples, potatoes, aromatic herbs

#### CALABRIA

**5** producers: mainly chestnuts and products containing chestnuts

#### MARCHE

**3** producers: apples, olive oil, dairy products

#### BOLZANO

**2** producers: yoghurts and apples

#### BASILICA

**106** producers: 26 milk and dairy products, 45 meat (animals and transformed) products, olive oil, fruits and cereals, aromatic herbs

#### LOMBARDY

**49** producers: they are mainly small producers of milk and cheese, some produce meat and processed meat, very few produce vegetable and fruits, cereals and honey

#### FRIULI VENEZIA GIULIA

**30** producers: 21 are milk and dairy products, but also honey, processed fruits, meat, fruits and cereals

#### TOSCANA

**22** producers: mainly honey, fruits and cereals

#### TRENTO

**8** producers: mainly fruits

#### SICILIA

**5** producers: mainly milk, cheese and cereals

#### LIGURIA

**2** producers: olive oil

#### SARDINIA

**1** producer: milk and dairy products

### To go further on the producers' uptake

In Italy, in the Lombardy region, ERSAF (Regional Agency for the Agriculture and Forest Services) encourages further uptakes of the OQT mountain product by producers. For 2020, the following activities are planned:

- Involvement of retailers for the promotion among consumers of the OQT mountain products, as well as for the endorsement of a fair price for producers.
- Proposal of a pilot project, with the objective to support farmers in finding mountain feedstuffs in particular during the winter period, for transhumant animals between pastures in mountain and non-mountain areas, to reach the percentage of dry matter required by regulation 665/2014. The project should improve or create a mountain feedstuffs supply chain, which would be the first step in the general development of the milk and dairy system.
- Proposal of trainings for farmers that operate in alpine pastures and process locally, this proposal is meant to improve the quality of processing and to guarantee a better quality for products that benefit of the OQT mountain product.
- The dairy cooperative of the Val di Scalve (BG) is interested in the use of the OQT and in some proposals meant to involve farmers in training courses to improve the quality of dairy finalised to the use of the OQT.
- ERSAF asked the Lombardy Region's DG Agricoltura to participate in a convention between all the stakeholders involved in the OQT, for an exchange of experiences and ideas.

The whole work plan is now in standby due to the COVID-19 emergency, but hopefully new progress will be obtained either directly or online, when possible.

Among the 49 listed operators, three are cooperative plants for milk and dairies. They have developed the detailed activities below:

The 'Latteria Sociale Valtellina', is a cooperative set in a mountain territory that transforms around 35.000.000 litres of milk from 110 agricultural industries, in the

provinces of Sondrio, Como and Lecco. This cooperative has chosen to embark in a process that implies a series of important interventions, that aim at directly or indirectly promoting their affiliation to the mountain territory, as well as favouring the introduction of the concept of sustainable agriculture in line with the territory.

These interventions also imply the progressive adjustment of all farms and industries, based on the Regulation 665/2014 for animal feed, the establishment of a voluntary certification of Animal Welfare according to the CREnBA standard, released by the 'Istituto Zooprofilattico' of Lombardy and Emilia Romagna, and controls on the requirements linked to the European directory on nitrate.

To facilitate the implementation of these activities, the cooperative has made technical staff available, that closely takes care of these controls and training activities,–and has also devised an app through which all farmers have information available at the ready, linked to the development of the quality and economy parameters of the milk production in their own farm, updates and information about regulations, in addition to offering a space in which to interact with other members of the cooperative for the exchange of goods and livestock.

The first result obtained from this project was the creation of a line of products deriving from the 'Latte Fresco Alta Qualità' (High Quality Fresh Milk), certified according to the UNI EN ISO:22005 standard. This line of products encloses High Quality according to Italian standards, Animal Welfare and mountain product labels.

Through another project linked to blockchain technology, in collaboration with the Lombardy Region, each consumer can view the characteristics of every single farm whose milk was used in the production of the purchased milk, just by inserting the expiration date.

Valori medi per	100 ml	125 ml	% AR*
di prodotto per litocchiere (125ml)			
Energia	285 kJ 68 kcal	357 kJ 85 kcal	4%
Grassi di cui acidi grassi saturi	3,9 g 2,6 g	4,9 g 3,3 g	7% 16%
Carboidrati di cui zuccheri	4,9 g 4,9 g	6,1 g 6,1 g	7% 7%
Proteine	3,4 g	4,3 g	9%
Sale***	0,13 g	0,16 g	3%
Calcio (125ml***) (190ml***)	120 mg 150 mg		

## Lattoria CISSVA of Capo di Ponte

The Lattoria CISSVA of Capo di Ponte (BS) in Valle Camonica, has begun the production of UHT milk 'mountain product', assigning the production to the Centrale del latte of Brescia (derogation for milk and dairy of 10km, decided by National Decree of 2017). There are 60 small farmers from the highest part of the valley involved in this chain. Lattoria CISSVA received some questions from its consumers asking why a mountain dairy Company needs to label its products as “mountain products” because it should be obvious, given that milk comes from a mountain area. This last example could be significant of how important it is to inform consumers, if we want to give value to the OQT.

## Lattoria di Chiuro

Lattoria di Chiuro (Valtellina) experiences many drawbacks to meet the requirements for milk, due to the difficulty of its farmers’ members to comply with the annual percentage of mountain dry matter in the animal diet. They are working to support farmers to create a mountain feedstuffs supply chain.

## ROMANIA

29.9% of Romania is mountainous and 19.7% of Romanian UAA is in mountain areas. 9.15% of Romanian agricultural production occurs in mountain areas, accounting for 0.7% of EU mountain production. Therefore, Romania's mountain regions are an area with important economic, social, cultural and environmental potential. The country is one of the most active MS in developing the OQT in its mountain areas.

**Adaptation process at national level:** In July 2016, the government released its [Decision nr. 506](#) that defined the institutional framework and measures for the implementation of the Regulation 665/2014. In March 2017, the Ministry of Agriculture [issued Order No. 52/2017](#) with the subsequent amends and updates which approved the procedure by those wishing to use the mountain product term have to follow in order to be able to use the term.

**Derogation on distance of processing:** Romania is the only country so far who decided not to use any derogation (reducing the distance to 0km).

**Procedure for authorisation of use:** The Mountain Area Agency, who is a part of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, is in charge of coordinating the implementation of the OQT by the local authorities. The analysis of the requests to use of the OQT, the authorisation and the monitoring of the users of the term will be done at the local level. The Mountain Area Agency will keep track of all the users in their National Registry of Mountain Products. This means that Romania has chosen to ask farmers for a pre-authorisation before they are allowed to use the OQT.

**Control system against fraud:** The National Consumers Protection Authority is responsible for the controls on the market and will check if the producer has been granted the authorisation to use the OQT and if the labelling is in norm with the national regulation.

**Rules on the format used:** In January 2019 the government released [its Order nr. 49](#) regulating the national logo to be used for the OQT.



### Producers' uptake of the OQT:

Since July 2017, 573 products (they were 75 at the end of January 2019) have already been registered under the OQT for mountain products: 264 dairy and dairy products, 9 meat and meat products, 183 fruits and vegetables, 107 bee products, 9 fish products and 1 bread, bakery and pastry product. The full database [is available here](#).

This important increase in the number of products using the OQT can be explained by 4 reasons, according to Danut Gitan, Director of AZM (National Mountain Agency):

- The whole process to obtain the OQT is centralised by the National Mountain Agency (publicity, registration, verification, controls), a dedicated organisation that aims at supporting the long-term development of mountain areas and which was officially created by the new Romanian Mountain Law.
- An insurance for the consumer that the product actually comes from the mountains, as the whole process is certified by the public authorities.
- A logo and a national database to give more visibility to the products
- A strong dissemination campaign in media (TV, radio, newspapers, the Internet, participation of producers to large national events to raise awareness and convince consumers of the added value of mountain products).



## SLOVENIA

63.2% of Slovenia is covered in mountains and 52.9% of its UAA is in mountain areas. It is second only to Austria in terms of the proportion of its UAA located in mountain areas. 32.33% of Slovenian food is produced in mountain areas accounting for 1.2% of EU mountain production. Slovenian mountains can be visualised in purple on this [map](#).

**Adaptation process at national level:** Slovenia has adapted its national legislation to integrate the OQT. It amended two regulations following the EU regulation: '[The Act of Agriculture \(OJ No 26/14\)](#)' adopted in April 2014 and '[The rules on quality schemes for agriculture products and foodstuffs \(OJ No 23/15\)](#)' adopted in April 2015.

**Derogation on distance of processing:** Slovenia did not make use of the possibility of reducing the derogation on the distance of processing outside mountain areas.



**Procedure for authorisation of use:** In Slovenia, every producer who wants to use the OQT has to inform the ministry about it at the beginning of their use of the term.

**Control system against fraud:** Controls will be made by the National Administration for Food Safety, Veterinary Sector and Plant Protection,

which is the competent authority responsible for official controls '*based on a risk analysis*'.

**Rules on the format used:** For the time being, the ministry did not introduce any prescribed logo or any requirement on the size of the font used on packaging.

**Producers' uptake of the OQT:** Currently, there is only one known farmer, producing fresh beef meat, registered as using the OQT. The number has not changed since 2016. Due to the very low uptake so far, most probably due to the lack of knowledge about the OQT by farmers, the Slovenian ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry should launch in 2020 a communication campaign about the OQT to explain to farmers the schemes and the procedures to use it.

## CZECH REPUBLIC

20.4% of the Czech Republic is covered in mountains and 11.4% of its UAA is in mountains. 7.23% of its agricultural output comes from mountain areas accounting for 1.3% of the EU mountain production.

**Adaptation process at national level:** In 2011, the Czech Republic adapted its legislation to integrate OQT in general and, since 2014, has included "mountain products" as one of these OQTs. The term "mountain product" can be added to a product as extra information as long as the product is produced in mountain areas as defined article 18 of [Council Regulation \(EC\) No 1257/1999](#).

**Derogation on distance of processing:** The Czech Republic did not make use of the possibility of reducing the derogation on the distance of processing outside mountain areas.

**Procedure for authorisation of use:** Every producer who wants to use the OQT has to apply through the Ministry of Agriculture of Czech Republic.

**Control system against fraud:** There are two authorities controlling the use of the term, the

State Veterinary Administration<sup>7</sup> responsible for animal products and the Czech Agriculture and Food Inspection Authority<sup>8</sup> responsible for plant-based products.

**Rules on the format used:** For the time being, there is no logo defined or prescribed nor is there any requirement on the size of the font used to write mountain product on the packaging.

**Producers' uptake of the OQT:** There do not seem to be any producers using the "mountain product" term. The majority of producers using OQTs use national terms such as "Czech food" and "Regional product" that were promoted by the national government through specific campaigns.

## BULGARIA

38.1% of the Bulgarian territory is mountainous, 7.9% of the UAA is in these mountains, and 6.35% of the total food production occurs in mountain areas.

**Adaptation process at national level:** On 28 May 2019 the Bulgarian Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry released the Ordinance № 4/28.05.2019 on the conditions and procedure for the use of the optional quality term "mountain product" and for the control of its use.

**Derogation on distance of processing:** Bulgaria has chosen to use the existing possibility of derogation; thus, slaughtering of animals and cutting and deboning of carcasses may take place outside mountain areas, provided that the distance from the mountain area in question does not exceed 30 km.

**Procedure for authorisation of use:** Bulgaria has chosen to use a prior authorisation format. The procedure requires farmers to submit an application to the Regional Food Safety Directorate. After documentary and on-the-spot check, the farmer will have to be registered in the public Register of the producers of OQT "mountain product", which

is published on the internet site of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry.

**Control system against fraud:** the Bulgarian Food Safety Agency is in charge of the adequate controls.

**Rules on the format used:** If the OQT appears on product packaging, the label shall be accompanied by the Ordinance's approved national logo.

**Producers' uptake of the OQT:** there is no information on the uptake by producers for the moment, but the prior authorisation should make it easier to follow who are the producers using this OQT.



## CROATIA

20.97% of Croatia has an altitude of 500m or above.

**Adaptation process at national level:** The national Ministry of Agriculture, who is responsible for the implementation of the OQT in Croatia, has not yet directly adapted the national policy to the EU regulation for mountain products.

Nonetheless, the process has started. Indeed, from 1 January 2019, a [new law on agriculture](#) was implemented and the Ministry of Agriculture created national legislative measures for protected designations of origin, protected geographical indications and guaranteed traditional agricultural and food products and the optional quality term "mountain product" (articles 21,22 and 25 for mountain products).

<sup>7</sup> <https://en.svscr.cz/>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.szpi.gov.cz/en/default.aspx>

More details on the implementation of the OQT mountain products are expected in 2020 as the Ministry for regional development and EU funds should prepare a programme on Croatian mountain products.

**Derogation on distance of processing:** There is no details so far on any reduction of the 30 km distance to do the processing.

**Procedure for authorisation of use:** potential applicants have to fill in the form of the annex XIII of the upper law where they detail raw material used such as the transformation process to justify that they can benefit from the OQT mountain products. Then a dedicated commission for mountain products within the Ministry of Agriculture must validate the possible use of this term before the producer is allowed to use it.

**Control system against fraud:** Annexes IX and X of the upper law specify the documents to be filled in by the evaluators when they go on-the-spot and control that the requirements of the OQT are well respected. Controls will be done by a Committee composed by three members: a representative of the Ministry of agriculture, a food inspector, and a representative of the Croatian accreditation agency.

**Rules on the format used:** there is no national logo so far.

**Producers' uptake of the OQT:** there is no information on the uptake by producers for the moment, but the prior authorisation should make it easier to follow who are the producers using this OQT.





**COUNTRIES THAT HAVE NOT YET  
ADAPTED THEIR NATIONAL LAWS TO  
IMPLEMENT THE OPTIONAL QUALITY  
TERM REGULATION AT NATIONAL LEVEL**

## PORTUGAL

43% of Portugal is mountainous and has 28.7% of its UAA in the mountains. 21.45% of its food is produced in mountain areas accounting for 2.3% of EU mountain production. The Portuguese Ministry of Agriculture informed us that they published the information about the OQT on their website and promoted and informed producer organisations and regional services about the term, but they do not have knowledge of any producers using the OQT in the country.

## SPAIN

Mountain areas cover 40.7% of the Spanish territory and 29.7% of the UAA is in mountains. Spain is the second biggest producer of EU mountain products after Italy (18.8% representing 4380 M€). According to Hazi (organisation in charge of rural development for the Basque government), nothing has been developed in Spain by the Ministry of Agriculture regarding the implementation and regulation of the term. In the Basque country, mountains cover 80% of the territory. Currently, producers of the Basque Country use the regional scheme called Eusko Label. The scheme is managed by HAZI and it certifies both the origin and the quality of the product. It is the most popular one at the regional level and it is well established.



## UNITED KINGDOM

In the UK, in particular Scotland, no regions have yet been officially defined as mountains by the government, though data from Nordregio suggest that 25.5% of the country is

covered in mountains. The reluctance of the governments to designate areas as mountainous might be linked to issues having to do with the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and Less Favoured Areas (LFAs).

At the same time, the Scottish Government seems reluctant to create supporting measures to foster the use of the OQT as it is already heavily focusing on the Team Scotland branding. They also tried to support other upland related branding in the recent past – The Crofters Brand – without real success.

In the UK, EU membership referendum of 23 June 2016, the country voted to leave the EU. No further progress on mountain products is expected for the moment as this is linked to EU regulation.



## GREECE

In Greece, mountains cover 49.3% of the area and 37.6% of the UAA is in mountains. The production of mountain products in Greece represents 23.35% of the country's total farming output. So far, there is no implementation of the OQT for mountain products, even if there are plans to do so. Farmers are more encouraged to use "classic" quality schemes such as PDO, PGI and TSG.

## CYPRUS

In Cyprus, mountains cover 24.7% of the area. The production of mountain products in Cyprus represents 11.4% of the country's total farming output. So far, farmers are also more encouraged to use the "classic" quality schemes such as PDO, PGI and TSG. However, Cyprus has adopted in 2019 a new mountain law and a mountain strategy for the country willing notably to develop mountain farming activities. In 2020, Cyprus is submitting to the Parliament a proposal regarding the OQT mountain product.

## SLOVAKIA

45.3% of Slovakia is mountainous and has 34.3% of its UAA in the mountains. The production of mountain products in Slovakia represents 20.84% of the country's total farming output. Despite the importance of mountain farming in the country, so far, there is no development on the implementation of the OQT in Slovakia.

## POLAND

2% of Poland is mountainous and has 1.7% of its UAA in the mountains. The production of mountain products in Poland represents 1.42% of the country's total farming output. For the moment, it seems that the OQT mountain product is not implemented in the national legislation and that there is no current plan to do so.

## FINLAND & SWEDEN

For both Sweden and Finland, most of the country is considered as an Area with Natural Constraint, but the actual part of mountain areas (and not the areas associated to mountain areas as they are above the 62 parallel) remains quite small. Most probably, this explains the reason why there is no current development planned for the implementation of the OQT mountain areas in these countries.



## CONCLUSION

Since the OQT “mountain product” officially entered into force in July 2014, mountain actors across Europe have taken steps to implement the OQT at national and producer levels. However, the process is far from complete. Some Member States still have to put in place appropriate measures to protect the use of the term “mountain product” in their territories.

Euromontana calls upon Member States to accelerate the implementation of the optional quality term and to implement adequate control systems while launching large communication campaigns to inform farmers about this opportunity. In addition, Euromontana encourages the European Commission to remind their MS about this OQT possibility and to do a follow-up of its implementation, including in the Farm to Fork Strategy to ensure the production of quality food in Europe.

There is a need for greater incentives to foster the use of the OQT by mountain producers so that producers see the benefits of using the term. In addition of sharing information, Euromontana has taken steps to promote the use of the term:

1. In 2014, Euromontana organised a communication campaign in 6 different countries (France – Slovenia – Romania – Italy – Portugal and Spain) with the project “[A New CAP – Mountains of opportunities](#)” (co-funded by DG AGRI).
2. In September 2016, Euromontana launched the [2016 European Charter for Mountain Quality Food Products](#) which contributes to the promotion and valorisation of mountain products at all levels. We encourage you to sign the Charter by visiting the [Charter web page](#).
3. To encourage the uptake at producers’ level, Euromontana has organised the conference on “[How to better valorise mountain food products? Launch of the European Charter for Mountain Quality Food Products](#)” on 18 October 2017.

New possibilities to raise consumer awareness of the existence of the OQT have been provided by DG AGRI with the launch of the [new promotion policy in 2016](#). The [regulation 1144/2014](#) for the promotion of European agricultural products that underlies the policy entered into force at the beginning of December 2015 and funding was made available as part of the Annual Programme for 2016 and [has been made available yearly since that time](#). This programme is now well established and will run again in 2020. Mountain products and the optional quality term are included in the call for proposals and Euromontana calls upon its members to develop project proposals (this is a great opportunity for mountain producers to promote their products and the OQT).

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The first edition of this article has been written by Alice Dos Santos and updated in March 2017 by Sarah Whitaker, then updated in January 2019 and May 2020 by Marie Clotteau.

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## ANNEX

Member State	Adaptation national laws	Mountain area concerned*	Derogation on distance of processing	Procedure for authorisation of use	Database	Control system (authority and procedure)	Rules on format used	Producers' uptake
Austria	No	70,50%	None	None	None	The Ministry of Health is taking over the job of controlling and monitoring the food that reaches store shelves and the Ministry of Agriculture is taking over the implementation of the requirements of the regulation 665/2014 in the field	None	
France	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ordinance 2015-1246 of 7 October 2015 on the indications of origin and quality</li> <li>▪ The Ministry of Agriculture has confirmed the legal framework for the use of the term</li> </ul>	23,10%	None	None (declaration)	None	Done by the competent administrative authorities at local level	None	Several products are using the OQT
Germany	Bill (Drucksache 18/6670) amending the Food specialties Act (18/6164)	2,4% (10% in Bavaria)	None	None	None	The existing authority in charge of controlling foodstuffs matters will monitor the cases of misuse and will apply appropriate administrative penalties	None	Not applied yet
Italy	A decree has been adopted on 26 July 2017 "Regolamento comunitario" (published to the Official Journal of 13 September 2017) to adapt the EU regulation	47,50%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 10km for milk and milk products</li> <li>▪ 30 km for the rest</li> </ul>	Declaration of use to regional government	Regional governments communicate producer list to national ministry	Control the use of the term at the market level	A national logo	<a href="#">Details per region are available on the National Ministry of Agriculture</a> , 615 products registered in early 2020



Member State	Adaptation national laws	Mountain area concerned*	Derogation on distance of processing	Procedure for authorisation of use	Database	Control system (authority and procedure)	Rules on format used	Producers' uptake
Romania	In June 2016, the government released its Decision nr. 5016 that defined the institutional framework and measures for the implementation of the Regulation 665/2014.	29,90%	No existing derogation, distance reduced to 0km	A pre-authorisation of use	National Registry of Mountain Products managed by Mountain Area Agency (Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Control the use of the quality term and the labelling on the market done by National Consumers Protection Authority</li> <li>Monitoring of the implementation of the legislation regarding food safety of the products that request and/or have obtained the right to use the OQT done by National Sanitary, Veterinary and Food Safety Authority</li> </ul>	A national logo	573 products already registered
Slovenia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Act of Agriculture (OJ 26/14)</li> <li>Rules on quality schemes for agriculture products and foodstuffs (OJ 23/15)</li> </ul>	63.2%	None	Declaration of use to the Ministry	National ministry keeps track of the use of the term	Done by the Administration of the Republic of Slovenia for Food Safety, Veterinary Sector and Plant Protection	None	Only one farmer, producing fresh beef meat, registered as using the OQT
Czech Republic	Existing legislation on OQT includes mountain product	20.4%	None	Declaration of use to the Ministry of Agriculture	National ministry keeps track of the use of the term	Done by the State Veterinary Administration <sup>9</sup> responsible for animal products and the Czech Agriculture and Food Inspection Authority <sup>10</sup> responsible for plant-based products	None	None
Bulgaria	Ordinance № 4/28.05.2019	38,10%	Slaughtering of animals and cutting and deboning of carcasses may take place outside mountain areas, provided that the distance from the mountain area in question does not exceed 30 km	A pre-authorisation system	Public register of the producers of OQT "mountain product", which is published on the website of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry	The Bulgarian Food Safety Agency is in charge of the adequate controls	A national logo	Unknown

<sup>9</sup> <https://en.svscr.cz/>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.szpi.gov.cz/en/default.aspx>

Member State	Adaptation national laws	Mountain area concerned*	Derogation on distance of processing	Procedure for authorisation of use	Database	Control system (authority and procedure)	Rules on format used	Producers' uptake
Croatia	From 1 January 2019, a <a href="#">new law on agriculture</a>	20.97%	Not known yet	A pre-authorisation system	None so far	A Committee composed by three members: a representative of the Ministry of agriculture, a food inspector, and a representative of the Croatian accreditation agency	None	Unknown
Portugal	Not planned	43,00%	None	None	None	None	None	Unknown
Spain	Not planned	40,70%	None	None	None	None	None	Unknown
UK/Scotland	Not planned	Not officially defined	None	None	None	None	None	Unknown
Greece	Not yet	49.3%	None	None	None	None	None	Unknown
Cyprus	Not yet	24.7%	None	None	None	None	None	Unknown
Slovakia	Not planned	45.3%	None	None	None	None	None	Unknown
Poland	Not planned	1.7%	None	None	None	None	None	Unknown
Finland	Not planned	Impossible to distinguish between real mountain areas and areas above 62 parallel	None	None	None	None	None	Unknown
Sweden	Not planned	Impossible to distinguish between real mountain areas and areas above 62 parallel	None	None	None	None	None	Unknown

\* Percentage of the total area. Share of LFA mountain agriculture. Source JRC study mentioned in the study.