

Accueil • Présentation • Presentation - English version • **History and concepts**

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1. HISTORY AND CONCEPT - GENESIS OF THE AOC

History shows that the custom of naming products according to the place where they are manufactured or harvested is very ancient. However, it was not until the late 19th century that the political powers in France, faced with the increasingly intense growth of domestic and foreign trade and above all the almost total destruction of the country's vines by phylloxera in 1870, decided to intervene.

1905: THE ADMINISTRATIVE PHASE

With the Law of 1st August 1905, the public authorities entrusted the administration with the task of defining the areas in which agricultural products could benefit from an appellation of origin. This phase did not bring a solution to the viticulture crises: there were no specifications as to quality, and the administrations had no means of resisting pressure from "politicians".

Revolts on the part of winegrowers took place in protest against the decisions made (1911, 1913). It was nonetheless in this period that there was recognition of the collective nature of the designation of origin as an integral part of the national patrimony.

1919: THE LEGAL PHASE

Learning the lessons of this failure, the public powers gave the courts the mission of defining the geographical area of the appellations and of defining the "local, loyal and consistent" customs (Law of 6 May 1919). But once again this was a failure.

- Many trials were instituted. The procedures took too long and nothing was defined until a court had made its ruling.
- The decisions of the courts followed diverse paths depending on the reports by assessors.

1935: CREATION OF THE COMITE NATIONAL VINS ET EAUX DE VIE

It was therefore in the context of the deepest of winegrowing crises that the Member of Parliament J. Capus and his allies managed to establish the appellations d'origine contrôlées by the decree of 30 July 1935. This decree combined the administrative, legal and professional aspects. The appellation d'origine contrôlée (AOC) was clearly distinguished from the indication of source, as AOC products had to present particular characteristics due to natural and human factors.

With this law, the recognition and regulation of AOCs were entrusted to a public body, the INAO, whose decision-making body, the Comité National, was given the power of proposal to ministries.



1990: EXTENSION OF THE AOC TO INCLUDE DAIRY PRODUCTS AND OTHER AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS OTHER THAN WINES AND SPIRITS

The economic success of AOC wines and eaux-de-vie since 1935 encouraged the legislator to extend the competence of the INAO to all unprocessed or processed agricultural or food products. The stakes were high, as this was the moment when debate was beginning within the European Community as to the future and the development of rural zones and the promotion of products. The Law of 2 July 1990 saw the creation of 2 more National Committees, covering dairy products and other agricultural products.

1992: THE PROTECTION OF DESIGNATIONS OF ORIGIN AND GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATIONS

On 14 July 1992, a European regulation R(EC) 92/2081 established a system of protection for geographic names, involving two categories : Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) and Protected Geographic Indication (PGI).

On 3 January 1994, a French law detailed the principles designed to implement this European legislation:

- only AOCs could become PDOs
- only labels and certificates of conformity could achieve European protection in the framework of the PGI

1999: PROTECTED GEOGRAPHIC INDICATION

After the broadening of its competences in 1990 to include dairy produce and agribusiness products, the Agricultural Orientation Law published on 9 July 1999 entrusted the Institut National des Appellations d'Origine with the management of Protected Geographic Indications (PGI), and provided for the creation of a fourth National Committee. In 10 years the INAO had thus seen its competence extended to all AOCs and to anything concerning origin.

2. HISTORY AND CONCEPT - PROTECTED DESIGNATION OF ORIGIN

THE CONCEPT

The Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée identifies an unprocessed or processed agricultural product, which draws its authenticity and typicity from its geographical origin.

This status guarantees a close link between the product and the terroir, which is a clearly defined geographical area with its own geological, agronomical, climatic, etc. characteristics, as well as particular disciplines self-imposed by the people in order to get the best out of the land. This notion of terroir encapsulates both natural and human factors, and means that the resulting product may not be reproduced outside its territory.

The purpose of the AOC is thus to protect a duly established reputation.

The production conditions of the product are also the result of a culture and a history: they include local, loyal and consistent customs and are included in the decree.

Finally, products with the AOC status must be submitted for approval under the responsibility of the INAO, including an analytic and organoleptic examination.



AOC: EVER-INCREASING INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION

The definition of an Appellation d'Origine was set by the Law of 1919 :

"An Appellation d'Origine includes the name of a country, a region or an area serving to designate a product from that country, region or area, and with qualities and characters that exist due to the geographical environment, comprised of natural factors and human factors."

The Decree of 30 July 1935 defines Appellations d'Origine Contrôlée for viti-viniculture products.

The Law of 2 July 1990 broadens this concept to include all unprocessed or processed agricultural or alimentary products that meet the above requirements. These products can only benefit from AOC status if they "possess a duly established reputation and have been subject to an approval procedure".

Each AOC is defined by decree following a proposal by the INAO. The decree defines the production area, and determines the production and approval conditions for the product.

This status and the steps taken to achieve it are now recognised and protected on the European level (regulation 2081/1992 PDO/PGI for products other than wines and spirits, regulation 1493/1999 for VQPRD - Vins de Qualité Produits dans une Région Déterminée).

Wines are ruled by a specific regulation n°1493/99 on the common organisation of the market in wine which provides each member state the publication of a list of its geographical names used to name a quality wine produced in specified regions.

The European Community regulation n° 2081/92 regarding protected designation of origin (PDO) and protected geographic definition (PGI) gives the definition of PDO for products other than wines and spirits :

"The name of a region, a specific place or, in exceptional cases, a country used to describe an agricultural product or a foodstuff :

These names benefit by definition from community protection.

- originating in that region, specific place or country

And

- the quality or characteristics of which are essentially or exclusively due to a particular geographical environment with its inherent natural and human factors, and the production, processing and preparation of which take place in the defined geographical area."

It creates a protection for the benefit of these geographical designations, granted following a registration procedure involving the authorities of the member States.

3. HISTORY AND CONCEPT - PROTECTED GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATION

On 14 July 1992, the European Commission established a set of regulations related to agribusiness products other than wines and spirits, with the aim of:

- encouraging the diversification of agricultural production,
- promoting characteristic products,
- improving farmers' revenues,
- keeping the rural population in its zone
- providing consumers with clear information.

This is Community Regulation n° 2081/92 on Protected Designations of Origin (PDO) and Protected Geographical Indications (PGI).

This is a system of protecting the geographical denomination of agricultural and/or agribusiness products whose characteristics and specific features are linked to the land, to the production area and to the skills involved.

As far as this single concept of a geographical denomination that is representative of a product is concerned, there are two possible identifications:

- the Protected Designation of Origin
- the Protected Geographical Indication.

A P.D.O. involves:

- a relationship between the product and its origin, marked by many specifically established natural and human factors. The product cannot be reproduced outside its area of origin,
- production, processing and preparation phases that are carried out in the same geographical area in which the natural and human factors are located.

A P.G.I. involves:

- a relationship between the product and its origin that is not as strong but is still sufficient to give a certain reputation,
- a geographical area in which only certain phases of production, processing and preparation must take place.

Article 2 of this regulation gives the definition of the P.G.I.:

"the name of a region, a specific place or, in exceptional cases, a country used to describe an agricultural product or a foodstuff originating in that region, specific place or country, which possesses a specific quality, reputation or other characteristics attributable to that geographical origin and the production and/or processing and/or preparation of which take place in the defined geographical area

In France, the legislator requires, by the law of 3 January 1994, that all applications to benefit from a PGI should be associated with an official sign of quality:

- Label Rouge (1) or
- Product Compliance Certification (2) (PCC).

The Agricultural Orientation law of 9 July 1999, whilst confirming this point, entrusted management of PGI to the INAO.

(1) Label Rouge / Red Label: created in 1965, certifies that a food product or non-food, unprocessed agricultural product has a series of characteristics making it possible to distinguish the Label Rouge product as being of higher quality.

(2) Conformity Certification: created in 1992, it certifies that a food product or a non-food, unprocessed agricultural product possesses (a minimum of two) specific characteristics that set it apart from the same product of ordinary quality.