

ITALIAN MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD SOVEREIGNTY AND FORESTRY

DECREE 16 October 2025

Standard amendments to the production specifications for the Protected Designation of Origin “Pecorino Toscano”.

THE DIRECTOR OF PQA I
OF THE GENERAL DIRECTORATE FOR THE PROMOTION
OF AGRI-FOOD QUALITY

Having regard to Regulation (EU) 2024/1143 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 April 2024 on geographical indications for wines, spirit drinks and agricultural products, as well as traditional specialities guaranteed and optional quality terms for agricultural products, amending Regulations (EU) no. 1308/2013, (EU) 2019/787 and (EU) 2019/1753 and replacing and repealing Regulation (EU) no. 1151/2012, which entered into force on 13 May 2024;

Having regard to Article 24 of Regulation (EU) 2024/1143, entitled “Amendments to a product specification” and, in particular, paragraph 9 according to which standard amendments to a product specification shall be assessed and approved by Member States or third countries in whose territory the geographical area of the product in question is located and communicated to the Commission;

Having regard to Italian Legislative Decree no.165 of 30 March 2001, containing general provisions on the organisation of work within public administrations, and in particular Article 16(1)(d);

Having regard to Italian Decree-Law no.173 of 11 November 2022, coordinated with Italian Law no. 204 of 16 December 2022, detailing “Urgent provisions regarding the reorganisation of the powers of Ministries,” by which the Ministry of Agricultural, Food and Forestry Policies assumed the name of Ministry of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forestry;

Having regard to the Decree of the President of the Italian Council of Ministers no.178 of 16 October 2023 detailing: “Reorganisation of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forestry, pursuant to Article 1(2) of Italian Decree-Law no.44 of 22 April 2023, converted, with amendments, by Italian Law no.74 of 21 June 2023;

Having regard to the Decree of the Minister of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forestry no. 0047783 of 31 January 2024, containing the details of the non-general senior management offices of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forestry and defining their responsibilities and related duties;

Having regard to Ministerial Directive no. 38839 of 29 January 2025, detailing the general guidelines on administrative activity and management for 2025, registered by the Italian Court of Auditors on 16 February 2025 under no. 193;

Having regard to Departmental Directive no. 99324 of 4 March 2025, registered by the Central Budget Office under no. 195 on 4 March 2025, for the implementation of the objectives defined by the “Directive detailing the general guidelines on administrative activity and management for 2025” of 29 January 2025, falling within the remit of the Department of Food Sovereignty and Horse Racing, pursuant to Decree no. 179/2019 of the President of the Italian Council of Ministers;

Having regard to Directorate-General Directive no. 0289099 of 28 June 2024 of the Directorate General for the Promotion of Agri-food Quality, registered by the Central Budget Office on 4 July 2024 under no. 493, in particular Article(1)(4), by which the holders of non-general management offices, in accordance with their respective office assignment decrees, are authorised to sign the documents and provisions relating to the administrative proceedings within their remit;

Having regard to Italian Presidential Decree no. 68 of 21 December 2023, registered with the Italian Court of Auditors on 16 January 2024, concerning the appointment of Mr Marco Lupo as Head of the Department of Food Sovereignty and Horse Racing;

Having regard to the Decree of the President of the Council of Ministers dated 7 February 2024, appointing a general directorate function, pursuant to Article 19(4) of Italian Legislative Decree no. 165/2001, to Ms Eleonora Iacovoni, registered by the Central Budget Office under no. 116, on 23 February 2024, pursuant to Article 5(2)(d) of Italian Legislative Decree no. 123 of 30 June 2011 ;

Having regard to the Decree of the Director of the General Directorate for the Promotion of Agri-food Quality no. 193350 of 30 April 2024, registered by the Italian Court of Auditors under no. 999 on 4 June 2024, by which Mr Pietro Gasparri was appointed Director of the PQA I Office of the General Directorate for Certified Quality and Protection of Geographical Indications for Agricultural, Agri-food, and Wine-Producing Products and General Affairs of the Directorate;

Having regard to Decree no. 12511 of the Minister of Agricultural, Food and Forestry Policies of 14 October 2013, detailing national provisions for the implementation of Regulation (EU) no. 1151/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 21 November 2012 on quality schemes for agricultural products and foodstuffs relating to PDO, PGI and TSG;

Having regard to the application submitted, within the framework of the procedure established by Regulation (EU) 2024/1143, by the *Consorzio di tutela Pecorino Toscano DOP*, (Protection Association for Pecorino Toscano DPO) which meets the requirements set out in Article 13(1) of Decree no. 12511 of 14 October 2013, aimed at obtaining the amendment to the production specifications of the protected designation of origin (PDO) “Pecorino Toscano”, registered with Commission Regulation (EC) no. 1263/96 of 1 July 1996, published in the *Official Journal* of the European Community L 163 of 2 July 1996;

Having regard to the positive opinion of the competent Tuscany Region regarding the amendment request;

Having regard to the provision published in the Official Journal of the Italian Republic - General Series - no. 180 of 5 August 2025, which made public the proposed amendment to the production specification for the PDO “Pecorino Toscano” to allow objections to be submitted, and that, within the deadline set by the decree dated 14 October 2013, no objections were received regarding the proposed amendment in question;

Considering that, following the positive outcome of the national evaluation procedure, in accordance with Article 24(9) of Regulation (EU) 2024/1143, the requirements exist to approve the standard amendments contained in the application to amend the production specification of the PDO “Pecorino Toscano”;

Having deemed it necessary to proceed with the publication of this decree approving the standard amendments to the production specification in question as well as to communicate these standard amendments to the European Commission;

Decrees:

Article 1

1. The standard amendment to the production specifications for the PDO “Pecorino Toscano” has been approved.
2. The consolidated production specifications and the single document for the PDO “Pecorino Toscano” are provided in Annexes 1 and 2 respectively.

Article 2

1. This decree enters into force on the day following its publication in the Official Journal of the Italian Republic.
2. The standard amendments referred to in Article 1 shall be communicated to the European Commission, within thirty days of the date of publication of this decree.
3. This decree and the consolidated specifications for the PDO “Pecorino Toscano” will be published on the website of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forestry.

Rome, 16 October 2025

The director: Gasparri

Annex 1

Production specifications for the Protected Designation of Origin “Pecorino Toscano”

Article 1

Designation

The designation of origin for “Pecorino Toscano” cheese is reserved for products that meet the requirements set out in these specifications, with regard to processing methods and the organoleptic and product characteristics deriving from the production area defined in Article 3 below.

Article 2

Characteristics of the product

The designation of origin “Pecorino Toscano” is reserved for cheese with the following characteristics: soft or semi-hard cheese, produced exclusively with whole sheep’s milk from the production area.

The minimum maturing period is 20 days for soft cheese and no less than four months for the semi-hard type.

For soft cheeses, the voluntary term “semi-mature” is permitted for products that have matured for at least sixty days. For matured products, the voluntary term “reserve” is permitted for products that have matured for at least eight months.

It is used as a table cheese or for grating.

It has the following characteristics:

cylindrical shape with flat faces and a slightly convex heel;

dimensions: face diameter from 15 to 30 centimetres, heel height from 7 to 20 centimetres with variations with higher or lower values in both characteristics depending on the technical production conditions.

Heel heights that are greater than the diameter will be preferred in semi-hard cheeses;

weight from 0.75 a 10.00 kg;

external wrap: yellow crust with various hues up to deep yellow; the colour of the crust may depend on the treatments the cheese has undergone;

colour of the body of the cheese: slightly straw-coloured white for the soft cheese type, slightly straw-coloured or straw-coloured for the semi-hard cheese type;

texture of the cheese: soft for the soft cheese type, compact and firm when being cut for the semi-hard cheese type, with possible small eyes that are not evenly distributed;

flavour: fragrant and accentuated, characteristic of the particular production procedures;

fat content in dry matter: not less than 40% for the matured product and not less than 45% for the soft product.

In order to limit processing waste and provided that the aforesaid weight and height requirements are met, it is permitted to produce Pecorino Toscano in shapes other than the cylindrical format when products are intended exclusively for pre-packaging (slicing, dicing and grating).

Article 3

Production area

The area of origin of the milk and the production and maturing of the above-mentioned cheese includes the entire territory of the Tuscany Region, the entire territory of the Municipalities of Alleronia and Castiglione del Lago in the Umbria Region, and the entire territory of the Municipalities of Acquapendente, Onano, San Lorenzo Nuovo, Grotte di Castro, Gradoli, Valentano, Farnese, Ischia di Castro, Montefiascone, Bolsena and Capodimonte in the Lazio Region.

Article 4

Elements that prove the product's origin

Each phase of the production process must be monitored by listing all inputs and outputs. Product traceability is ensured by this and by compiling specific registers managed by the inspection body, of livestock farmers, collection centres, producers/maturers, dairies, packagers and cutters, by keeping production and packaging registers and by notification to the inspection body of the quantities produced. Furthermore, the quantity of milk produced and the sheep from which the milk comes must undergo checks. The registers of the sheep raised, indicating the total number of animals on the farm, must always be kept up to date. A milk production/unloading register regarding the quantity of milk produced must also be kept. In dairies, the storage tanks must be identified, the milk suitable for producing Pecorino Toscano must be kept separate from other milk, and milk storage and handling operations must be recorded. A "Pecorino Toscano" production register must also be kept. All natural and legal persons recorded in the lists are subject to checks by the inspection body, according to the terms of the production specification and the corresponding inspection plan.

Article 5

Method of production

“Pecorino Toscano” is produced exclusively with whole sheep’s milk coming from the production area.

Sheep must mainly be fed with green or dried fodder from local natural pastures, possibly supplemented with hay and concentrated straight feeding stuffs.

The percentage of food originating from outside the Pecorino Toscano production area shall not, in any case, exceed 30% of the dry matter on an annual basis.

The milk must be coagulated at a temperature of between 33° and 38° using calf or vegetable rennet so as to obtain coagulation of the milk within 20-25 minutes.

The milk may either be used raw or undergo thermal treatment, including pasteurisation, and may be inoculated with cultures of natural or selected indigenous milk enzymes.

The Protection Association (*Consorzio di tutela*) responsible for supervision shall keep a collection of strains of selected sheep’s milk enzymes from the designated area, accompanied by sheets describing the characteristics of the individual strains. This collection of strains may be updated periodically through new research validated by the Protection Association and transmitted to the competent Ministry.

The cheese must be produced using a characteristic technology and during processing the curd is cut until the lumps have reached the size of a hazelnut for the soft Pecorino Toscano and the size of a maize kernel for the mature Pecorino Toscano.

To prepare the latter, the curd may also undergo thermal treatment (cooking) at 40-42°C for 10-15 minutes.

After cutting and cooking (if required), the curd is placed in special moulds to drain the whey.

The draining or syneresis is carried out by manual pressing or by steaming. Salting can be done dry by directly sprinkling salt or by immersion in brine with 17-19% sodium chloride, i.e. 15 to 17 degrees Baumé. For each kilogram of weight, the cheeses must remain at least eight hours for the soft Pecorino Toscano and at least 12 hours for the mature Pecorino Toscano.

“Pecorino Toscano” may be treated externally with an anti-mould product and must mature in suitable spaces, with a temperature that varies during the maturing period from 5 to 15°C and with relative humidity varying from 75 to 95%.

The maturing period is at least twenty days for the soft cheese and must be no less than four months for the matured cheese.

Article 6

Link with the environment

Specific nature of the geographical area

As regards natural factors, note should be taken of the special characteristics of the areas used for sheep farming, which should be almost exclusively in the wild, using natural pastures with abundant wild plant life giving the milk used for cheese making distinctive qualities.

As regards human factors, beside their historically proven economic importance, the farms involved play an important social role by using 'marginal' land, which would otherwise be progressively abandoned with the subsequent impoverishment of natural resources.

The method of sheep-rearing and the wild and cultivated plants that make up the livestock's primary diet – together with the method of production that shows respect for all the qualities of sheep's milk, from the processing temperatures to the method of maturing – afford the milk and the finished product those specific characteristics that have always led to Pecorino Toscano being defined as a "mild" product.

Product specifications

Yellow crust. Its flavour is mild and never savoury or sharp.

Causal link between the geographical area and the quality or characteristics of the product (for PDOs) or a specific quality, reputation or other characteristics of the product (for PGIs)

This cheese of ancient origin, whose existence in Etruscan times is the object of extensive historical evidence spread over the centuries in the area known as "Maremma", most of which lies in the Tuscany Region. Traditionally, the product was designated by names referring to its geographical origin, i.e. with the more general denomination of "Toscano" (Tuscan). Over time, given its largely common features, a single production standard and a designation related in etymological terms to its historical and geographical characteristics were established.

The distinctive characteristics of Pecorino Toscano derive both from the sheep's milk and the production method. The animals graze for almost the entire year and draw from the wild and cultivated plants those scents and aromas characteristic of the climate in their area of origin that are mild and decisive at the same time. The typically strong flavour of sheep's milk is mitigated by the characteristics of the climate and pastures, which have a positive influence on the animals' lives and therefore their production. These characteristics are preserved in the processing method, with temperatures equal to those of the milk inside the udder, with the traditional use of calf rennet and minimal salting and maturation temperatures that respect the enzymes' natural activity. In keeping with Tuscan tradition, even after long maturing, the cheese retains that strong but not overpowering flavour, mild and never sharp, which has always allowed Pecorino Toscano to suit all palates.

Article 7

Controls

The product's compliance with specifications is monitored by an inspection body, in accordance with the provisions of Article 37 of Regulation (EU) no. 2024/1143.

Article 8

Labelling

“Pecorino Toscano” can be placed on the market in whole forms, in fractions of a form, or grated.

Upon release for consumption, Pecorino Toscano cheese must bear the mark referred to in Article 9, as a guarantee of its compliance with the specifications. This mark is placed on the heel of the cheese wheel. Pre-packed portions can be marked on the packaging, provided this is done in the area of origin.

The Pecorino Toscano may be packaged in portions outside the area of origin and must bear the logo of the dairy or maturer, as per Article 9.

To ensure proper management of the portioning and packaging phases of Pecorino Toscano, operators must submit to the supervision of the competent authorities or their representatives and must, in any case, enter into an agreement with the Protection Association responsible for supervision.

The acronym shown under the logo identifies the producer, the maturer and the cutter whose product is certified by the inspection body and which places Pecorino Toscano on the market.

The Pecorino Toscano cheese wheels or packages bear a label, authorised by the Protection Association responsible for supervision, with the following minimum characteristics:

the words “Pecorino Toscano DOP” (PDO) or “Pecorino Toscano DOP stagionato” (“Mature Pecorino Toscano PDO”) must be the most prominent and visible of all the other words on the label, in terms of size, type and position;

The coloured mark, as per Article 9, must be reproduced one or more times, with a minimum size of 15 mm.

Article 9

Logo

Mark to be placed on the cheese wheels or on the portioned packages:



50 mm

The first digit indicates the type of person placing the cheese on the market: 1 to 3 for dairies; 4 to 6 for maturers; 7 to 9 cutters residing in the area.

The second and third digits identify the number of the dairy/maturer/cutter accredited by the inspection body.

Mark to be placed on the labels:

Minimum size 15 mm



It can be used in the colours shown above (bright green, white and bright red on a yellow background) or in one colour.

Annex 2

Single document

Pecorino Toscano

1. NAME(-I) of the PGI

“Pecorino Toscano”

2. Member State or Third country

Italy

3. Description of the agricultural or food product

3.1. Combined Nomenclature Code

04 - milk and dairy products; birds' eggs; natural honey; edible products of animal origin, not elsewhere specified or included

0406 - Cheeses and milk products

3.2. Description of the product to which the designation referred to in point 1 applies

"Pecorino Toscano" is a cheese with the following characteristics: soft or semi-hard cheese, produced exclusively with whole sheep's milk from the production area.

The minimum maturing period is 20 days for soft cheese and no less than four months for the semi-hard type.

For soft cheeses, the voluntary term "semi-mature" is permitted for products that have matured for at least sixty days. For matured products, the voluntary term "reserve" is permitted for products that have matured for at least eight months.

It is used as a table cheese or for grating.

It has the following characteristics:

cylindrical shape with flat faces and a slightly convex heel;

dimensions: face diameter from 15 to 30 centimetres, heel height from 7 to 20 centimetres with variations with higher or lower values in both characteristics depending on the technical production conditions.

Heel heights that are greater than the diameter will be preferred in semi-hard cheeses; weight from 0.75 to 10.00 kg;

external wrap: yellow crust with various hues up to deep yellow; the colour of the crust may depend on the treatments the cheese has undergone;

colour of the body of the cheese: slightly straw-coloured white for the soft cheese type, slightly straw-coloured or straw-coloured for the semi-hard cheese type;

texture of the cheese: soft for the soft cheese type, compact and firm when being cut for the semi-hard cheese type, with possible small eyes that are not evenly distributed;

flavour: fragrant and accentuated, characteristic of the particular production procedures;

fat content in dry matter: not less than 40% for the matured product and not less than 45% for the soft product.

In order to limit processing waste and provided that the aforesaid weight and height requirements are met, it is permitted to produce Pecorino Toscano in shapes other than the

cylindrical format when products are intended exclusively for pre-packaging (slicing, dicing and grating).

3.3. Food (only for products of animal origin) and raw materials (only for processed products)

Sheep must mainly be fed with green or dried fodder from local natural pastures, possibly supplemented with hay and concentrated straight feeding stuffs.

The percentage of food originating from outside the Pecorino Toscano production area shall not, in any case, exceed 30% of the dry matter on an annual basis.

The origin of fresh or hayed food and feed has been affected in recent years by sudden climate changes, which have led to both excessive rainfall during haymaking periods, resulting in hay spoilage, and excessive heat, resulting in a reduction in fresh or hay forage production.

Pecorino Toscano is produced with whole sheep's milk from the area of origin as required in the specifications. It can be processed raw or it can undergo thermal treatment up to pasteurisation. Only native enzymes obtained from the specific collection of strains are permitted.

3.4. Specific stages of production that must take place in the defined geographical area

All stages of milk production and the production of Pecorino Toscano must take place in the area of origin until its commercial maturity of twenty days for the soft type and four months for the matured type.

3.5. Specific rules regarding slicing, grating, packaging, etc. of the product to which the registered designation refers

"Pecorino Toscano" can be placed on the market in whole forms, in fractions of a form, or grated.

3.6. Specific rules regarding labelling of the product to which the registered designation refers

Each whole wheel of Pecorino Toscano must bear the PDO identifying logo. The logo features the words Pecorino Toscano DOP (PDO), a stylised image of a sheep's head, and the identification number of the producing dairy, maturer, or authorised packager operating in the area of origin. If the packager does not operate in the area of origin, the number will identify the dairy or the maturer.



Each label affixed to whole cheeses, portions, slices, or grated cheese must bear the words “Pecorino Toscano DOP” (PDO) or “Pecorino Toscano DOP stagionato” (“Mature Pecorino Toscano PDO”), which must be the most prominent and visible of all the other words on the label, in terms of size, type and position. For soft cheeses, the voluntary term “semi-mature” is permitted for products that have matured for at least sixty days. For matured products, the voluntary term “reserve” is permitted for products that have matured for at least eight months. The coloured mark, as per Article 5 of the production specifications, must be reproduced one or more times, with a minimum diameter of 15 mm.



4. Concise description of the geographical area

The production area of Pecorino Toscano PDO includes the entire territory of the Tuscany Region, the entire territory of the Municipalities of Alleronia and Castiglione del Lago in the Umbria Region, and the entire territory of the Municipalities of Acquapendente, Onano, San Lorenzo Nuovo, Grotte di Castro, Gradoli, Valentano, Farnese, Ischia di Castro, Montefiascone, Bolsena and Capodimonte in the Lazio Region.

5. Link with the geographical area

5.1. Specific nature of the geographical area

As regards natural factors, note should be taken of the special characteristics of the areas used for sheep farming, which should be almost exclusively in the wild, using natural pastures with abundant wild plant life giving the milk used for cheese making distinctive qualities.

As regards human factors, beside their historically proven economic importance, the farms involved play an important social role by using 'marginal' land, which would otherwise be progressively abandoned with the subsequent impoverishment of natural resources.

The method of sheep-rearing and the wild and cultivated plants that make up the livestock's primary diet – together with the method of production that shows respect for all the qualities of sheep's milk, from the processing temperatures to the method of maturing – afford the milk and the finished product those specific characteristics that have always led to Pecorino Toscano being defined as a "mild" product.

5.2. Product specifications

Yellow crust.

Its flavour is mild and never savoury or sharp.

5.3. Causal link between the geographical area and the quality or characteristics of the product (for PDOs) or a specific quality, reputation or other characteristics of the product (for PGIs)

This cheese of ancient origin, whose existence in Etruscan times is the object of extensive historical evidence spread over the centuries in the area known as "Maremma", most of which lies in the Tuscany Region. Traditionally, the product was designated by names referring to its geographical origin, i.e. with the more general denomination of "Toscano" (Tuscan). Over time, given its largely common features, a single production standard and a designation related in etymological terms to its historical and geographical characteristics were established.

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