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**PROTECTED PRODUCTS IN THE EUROPEAN UNION  
– SELECTED ECONOMIC ASPECTS**

Key words: Common Agricultural Policy, food quality schemes, geographical indication, designations of origin, specialty guaranteed

**ABSTRACT.** The aim of the paper is to present the situation of the protected products market in the European Union in terms of their supply. To protect the names of specific products, their unique characteristics, and the traditional manufacture, a quality scheme with the following designations: Protected Designation of Origin (PDO), Protected Geographical Indication (PGI), Geographical Indication (GI) and Traditional Specialty Guaranteed (TSG) was introduced in the European Union. EU databases such as eAmbrosia, GIview and European Commissions reports were used in this study. Recently available data and, to show changes, data for 2013-2023 were used. Conducting research proved that the role of protected agri-food products is growing, both in terms of value and quantity. This may indicate that food producers are becoming more active in submitting products to the protected product system, which is also beneficial to consumers. However, there are large disparities among EU countries in terms of producers' activity in registering products. Most of the agri-food products on the register of protected products come from southern Europe countries. The structure of registered agri-food products is dominated by vegetables and fruits, cheeses, and meat and meat products.

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## INTRODUCTION

For many years, reforms of the European Union's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) have emphasized the need to pursue the sustainable development of the food system, increasing emphasis on environmentally sustainable production methods, including organic production and quality issues for agri-food products. As a result, European Commission implemented and further develops EU food quality schemes with good examples of food production systems incorporating sustainable and traditional practices. This is also reflected in the latest strategy for sustainable development, covering all areas of social life, economy and environment, adopted under the name of the European Green Deal. It states that food produced in Europe should be safe, nutritious and of high quality, and its production method should be safe for the natural environment and neutral for the climate. This direction of change considers the expectations of European consumers who report a demand for high-quality products [Polityka Insight/Research 2021]. These also include regional and traditional products protected under quality schemes in the European Union.

As many researchers show [e.g. Sloan, Hutt 2019, Sloan 2020, Glogovetan et al. 2022, Euromonitor International 2023] quality of food is an important argument for consumers when purchasing food turning their attention to the quality and origin of the products. They anticipate higher dietary, health and hygiene standards from such products. As Agnieszka Hajdukiewicz [2014] emphasized, buyers attribute characteristics of products to the specific origin or production method. That indicates the "quality turn" in the economy, from the "industrial world", with its heavily standardized quality conventions and logic of mass commodity production, to the "domestic world", where quality conventions are embedded in trust, tradition and place support more differentiated, localized and eco-friendly products. There are also benefits for producers of such products particularly those who produce in the most disadvantaged or marginalized areas, whose production costs of conventional products are high. Products under quality designation can contribute to the increase of farmers' income in exchange for a real qualitative effort. Furthermore, the increasing income will positively affect the rural population linked to both primary and secondary production activities derived from agri-food processing. In this case, protected agricultural products can complement both rural development policy and the market support and income support policies implemented under the Common Agricultural Policy [Martínez-Arnáiz et al. 2022]. So, it is natural that if more added value production remains in rural areas, the whole community will benefit from the support of economic activities, extended job opportunities, spin-offs for other rural activities such as tourism, elevated land values, and socio-cultural promotion [Hajdukiewicz 2014].

Issues related to the general principles of product registration, including legal issues, are most often discussed in the literature [e.g. Lipińska 2008, Tetwejer 2010, Winawer, Wujec 2013], while issues related to the empirical approach are presented relatively less

often. The aim of the paper is to present the situation of the protected products market in the European Union in terms of their supply. These issues are important for identifying the protected products market's development level. The layout of the paper begins with the research material and methodology. This is followed by the essence of protected products, with an emphasis on types of protected designations. Lastly, the results and conclusions are presented.

## RESEARCH MATERIAL AND METHODOLOGY

European Union databases, websites of institutions operating for protected products and reports were used for conducting this study. Data was obtained from eAmbrosia and GIview databases which contain quality product registers. eAmbrosia database lists information about protected food and agricultural products, wine, spirits and aromatized wine. Before 2019 data for these products were collected in three different databases: E-SPIRIT-DRINKS, DOOR and E-BACCHUS. A special feature of GIview database – launched in 2022 by the EU Intellectual Property Office – is open to national authorities and producer groups to upload extended data, such as the contact data of the producer groups and control bodies, maps, photographs of the product, product description, the geographical area, sustainability statements, etc. This is designed both to maximize information about protected products and to directly assist anti-fraud authorities who will easily see the descriptions and photos of products and be able to directly contact the concerned authorities and the producer group of the product.

Both databases are valuable for consumers and producers. They also contain detailed information on non-EU products through bilateral and multilateral agreements. Recently available data for 2013-2023 were used. The descriptive analysis supported by the tabular and graphical presentation of data was used in the study.

## THE ESSENCE OF PROTECTED PRODUCTS

An essential goal of the agri-food quality policy of the European Union is to inform consumers about product characteristics and farming attributes. Product characteristics include the following features such as physical, chemical, microbiological and organoleptic. The farming attributes are referred to the production method, type of animal husbandry, use of processing techniques, place of farming and production, etc.

Various instruments are combined into a comprehensive agricultural quality policy taking into consideration private and national designations which dominate the market and ensure innovation. Overall, all designations which are used to create the quality policy can be divided into two main groups: certification-type and labeling-type. Certification

designations usually represent detailed specifications and are checked periodically by the certifying bodies. Labeling designations are applicable for relatively straightforward claims that are normally self-declared by producers and which can be subject to official controls. Both certification and labeling demonstrate that agri-food product meets baseline standards established in the country. They can also be used to indicate some value-adding qualities beyond baseline standards – either product characteristics or farming attributes [CEC 2009].

Agri-food products labeled by quality designations possess characteristics that are specific to a territory or to a particular production method and are supposed to be positioned in a higher price level segment than similar non-labeled products. This way protection as an intellectual property right is used. They also contribute to increasing the shared competitiveness of the agri-food industries under their protection. Quality designations are the key instruments that add up to the development and sustainability of rural areas by supporting small or specific supply chains. Moreover, they can be treated as an added value for the companies which produce agricultural products under the quality designation, in addition to their own brand. Linking quality to geographical origin is



Figure 1. Functions of territorial food quality designations  
Source: [Martínez-Arnáiz et al. 2022]

quite a powerful marketing strategy for businesses which creates cooperative competition between companies. In this way, the physical resources and potential of the territory are terms of symbiotic marketing relationships for companies selling origin-specific products [Martínez-Arnáiz et al. 2022]. The interaction of the above function of quality designation is presented in Figure 1. It suggests a differentiated quality value for agricultural and food products linked to the specific territory.

Note that quality designations were originally developed in the 19th century and introduced in France mainly for wines as an intellectual property tool to prevent misuse of product names in the market. This mainly aims at protecting products sold outside of their production area. Since then protection of other agri-food products with significant economic value was also been gradually implemented throughout the EU.

Quality designations have the following general features [Glogovetan et al. 2022]: most production stages must be implemented in a delimited geographical area, the recipe is authentic (mixture of ingredients), the raw materials are original, the manufacturing process is traditional and/or contains specific features for that region and products share a part of the gastronomic heritage of the community.

The EU geographical indications system protects the names of products from specific regions that have specific qualities or enjoy a reputation linked to the production territory. These quality designations are as follows: Protected Designation of Origin (PDO), Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) and Geographical Indication (GI). PDO and PGI<sup>2</sup> are dedicated to agricultural products and foodstuffs and additionally to wine, while GI is only for spirit drinks and aromatized wines. The other quality sign that highlights the traditional manufacturing process of agricultural products and foodstuffs is Traditional Specialty Guaranteed (TSG). Any producers or producer groups can register their products under the above quality designations. Firstly, the product's specifications and specified link to the geographical area, if applicable should be prepared. The application is to be sent to national authorities for scrutiny and then forwarded to the European Commission, which will review the application. Note that non-EU products may also be registered in the protected products system. Names of products registered under the EU quality designations are part of the European system of intellectual property rights and are legally protected against imitation and misuse within the EU and, also, in non-EU countries where a specific protection agreement has been signed.

<sup>2</sup> In both indications, the quality of the product and its characteristics should be attributed to the geographical environment and its inherent natural factors and human. The main difference between these designations is that the PDO is granted to products whose entire manufacturing process takes place in a specific area, and in the case of a PGI it can be one of the stages of this process (production, processing or preparation). More on the features and legal basis of quality designations in Izabela Lipińska [2008], Urszula Tetwejer [2010], Zofia Winawer and Henryk Wujec [2013].

## RESULTS

Agricultural products, foodstuffs and beverages produced under the EU quality scheme have a tangible contribution to the European food and drink sector. In 2017 products under PDO/PGI/TSG accounted for 7.0% of the sales value of the whole European Union food and drink market. The biggest share of the total sales value of protected products (more than half) in 2017 fell on wines with 51.1%. It is followed by agricultural products and foodstuffs with 35.4% of total sales values and the share of this group in the total number of protected products increased in 2012-2017. The smallest shares accounted for spirit drinks and aromatized wine products with 13.4% and about 0.1% respectively [EC 2021a].

More than half of the total sales values fell on the national markets where the products were manufactured and 16% accounted for the internal trade within 27 EU member states. Estimated sales of PDO/PGI/TSG products out EU market are represented 16% of the external EU trade of food and beverages. The biggest share in the external EU trade value of food and beverages had wines (50%) and spirit drinks (39%). Agricultural products and foodstuffs amounted to 11% of external EU trade. Additionally, note that the main exporters of EU quality scheme-labeled products to the external market (non-EU countries) in 2017 were France (44%), Italy (20%) and the United Kingdom (19%) [EC 2021b].

The total number of products registered in the European Union's quality designations is 3,582 (Table 1). As mentioned before, EU quality designations also apply to producers from non-EU countries, in accordance with the multilateral rules of the World Trade Organization. However, the number of registrations from non-EU countries is

Table 1. Number and structure of registered products from the EU and non-EU countries in 2023

Categories	Product type	Number of products	Share in the total number of products [%]
EU countries	food and agricultural products	1,488	41.5
	spirit drinks and aromatized wine	242	6.8
	wine	1,620	45.2
<b>Total</b>	-	<b>3,350</b>	<b>93.5</b>
Non-EU countries	food and agricultural products	202	5.6
	spirit drinks and aromatized wine	18	0.5
	wine	12	0.3
<b>Total</b>	-	<b>232</b>	<b>6.5</b>
<b>Total number of products</b>	-	<b>3,582</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: own calculation based on [EC 2023a,b]

not significant and amounts to 232, which is 6.5% of the total number of registered products. Of all registered products from EU and non-EU countries, 47.3% (1,690) are food and agricultural products and only slightly less wine (45.6%). However, when only EU countries are considered, the prevalence of wine quantity and value of wines is visible.

Looking at changes over the past 10 years in the structure of products by type from EU countries, it can be said that the role of food and agricultural-protected products has steadily increased (Figure 2). Between 2013 and 2023, 431 products were added to the system of protected products, of which 369 were food and agricultural products. From the consumer’s point of view, this is a positive trend which also demonstrates that food producers are becoming more active in submitting products to the system of protected products.

The most active in registering products during the last ten years were producers from southern EU countries (mainly France and Italy) but also from Germany and the Netherlands, as well as Romania and Bulgaria, although the number of products submitted to the system was several times smaller in these countries compared to the leaders (Figure 3). Moreover, the total number of registered products from Bulgaria and Romania is very low (10-11 products).

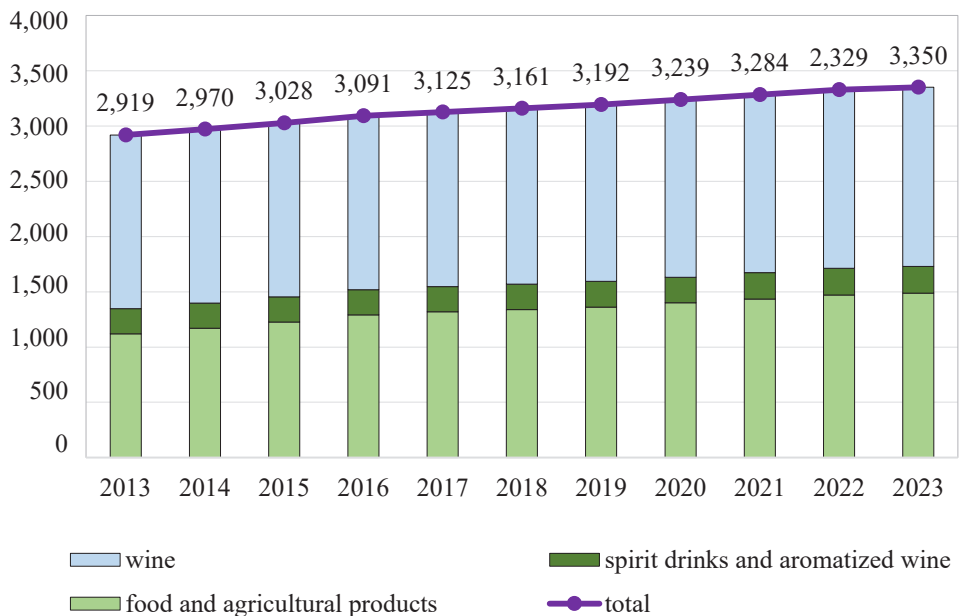


Figure 2. Changes in the number of registered products from EU countries by product type in 2013-2023

Source: own calculation based on [EC 2023a,b]

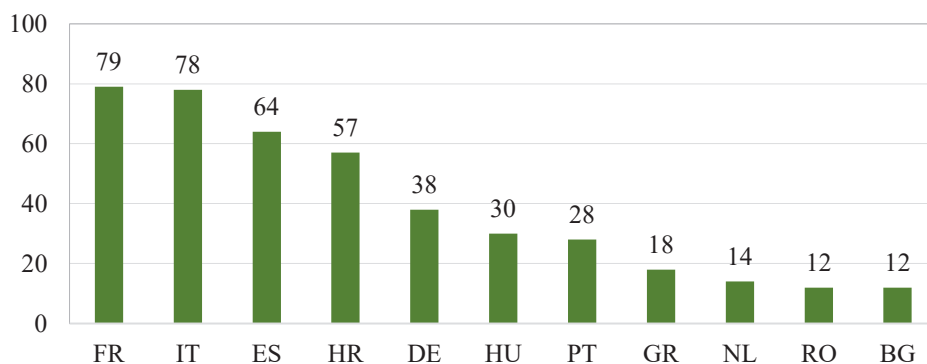


Figure 3. The EU countries with the highest increase in the registered protected products in 2013-2023

Source: own calculation based on [EC 2023a,b]

Products registered under the PDO accounted for the biggest share among all registered products— 54.5% (Table 2). And almost 2/3 of all PDO registrations are made for wines (1,181 products). Products registered under PGI account for 36.5% of the total registered products and most of them (784) are food and agricultural products. It can be concluded that meeting the conditions for obtaining a PGI (at least one of the stages of the production process should be linked with the geographic area) is easier for producers than the more

Table 2. Registered products from EU countries by quality designations and product type in 2023

Type of the quality designation	Product type			Total	Share [%]
	food and agricultural products	spirit drinks and aromatized wine	wine		
Protected Designation of Origin (PDO)	644	-	1,181	1,825	54,5
Protected Geographical Indication (PGI)	784	-	439	1,223	36,5
Geographical indication (GI)	-	242	-	242	7,2
Traditional Specialities Guaranteed (TSG)	60	-	-	60	1,8
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,488</b>	<b>242</b>	<b>1,620</b>	<b>3,350</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: own calculation based on [EC 2023a,b]



restrictive conditions for obtaining a PDO. GTS-labeled products are the least likely to be registered, where documentation of the period during which the product was produced domestically is required. This should also guarantee that the recipe has been passed down from generation to generation (at least 30 years).

Narrowing the analysis to food and agricultural protected products, note that almost all EU countries (except Malta) have at least one of the registered products. The vast majority of protected products (70%) are produced in five countries<sup>3</sup>: Italy, France, Spain, Portugal and Greece (Figure 4). As Zofia Wanat and Jakob Hanke Vela [2019] emphasize, these five countries are also strong supporters of mandatory origin labeling of all foods in the EU Single Market. Following the countries mentioned above is Germany (with 95 products registered), and four EU new Member States (countries that joined the EU in 2004 and later). However, the number of registered products in these countries is significantly lower ranging from 44 products in Poland to 33 products in Hungary. Among the countries with less than 20 registered products are both new Member States (Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia and the Baltic States) and old EU Member States (mainly Scandinavian and Benelux

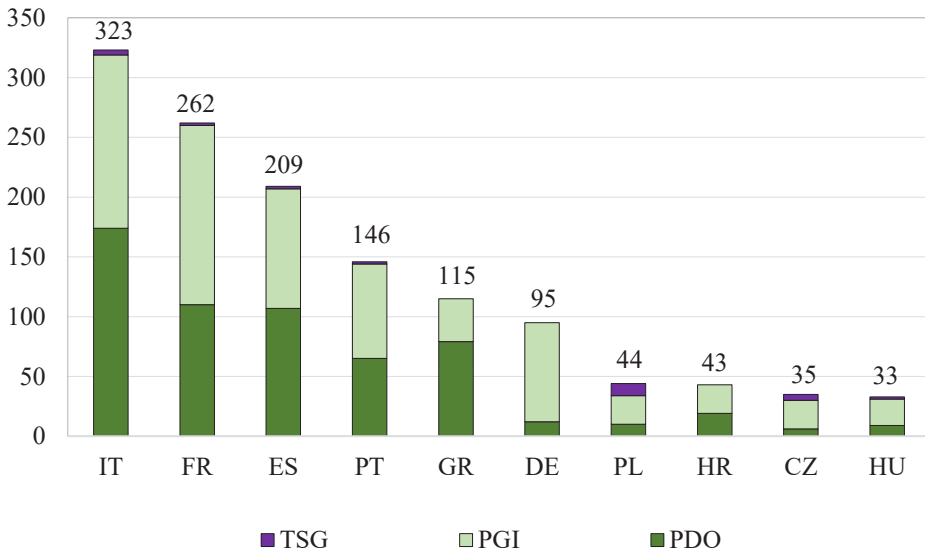


Figure 4. Structure of registered agri-food products by the type of designation in the EU countries with the highest number of registered products in 2023

Source: own calculation based on [EC 2023a,b]

<sup>3</sup> These countries also produce 80% of total protected wine in the EU [Huysmans, Swinnen 2019].

countries). Agnieszka Baer-Nawrocka and Aneta Suchoń [2014] emphasized that the success of French and Italian producers in being very active in submitting products to the protected product register, in addition to their extensive experience, is influenced by the legal regulations favoring this activity for groups of producers submitting applications. Producing a protected product undoubtedly requires concerted, coordinated action by many players. In addition, these groups are actively conducting information and promotion activities. Producer groups in France and Italy most often are organized as cooperatives, consortia, or associations formed by raw material producers, processors and distributors. This includes both small- and large-scale production and sales entities.

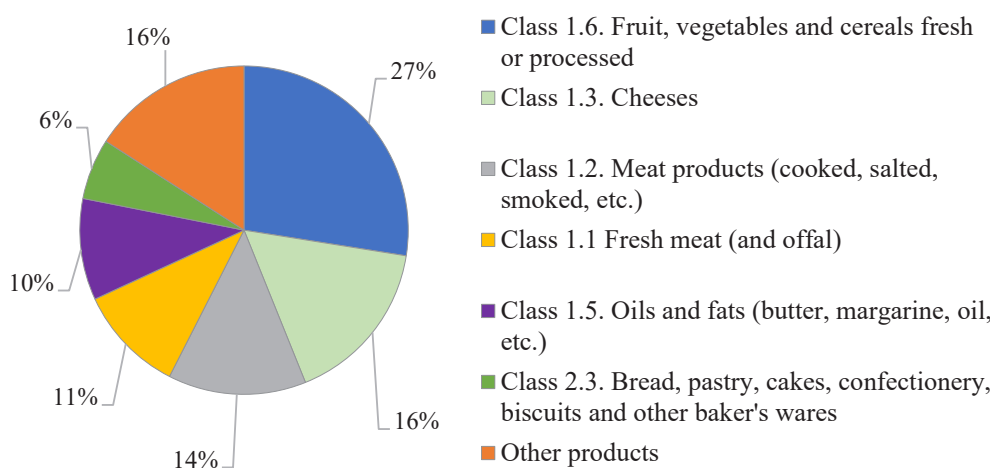


Figure 5. Structure of protected products by the class of product in 2023

Source: own calculation based on [EC 2023a,b]

Different product groups are registered under the quality designations (Figure 5). The largest share in the structure of protected products (27.5%) is Class 1.6. “Fruit, vegetables and cereals fresh or processed”, 1/4 of which are products registered in Italy and as many together from Spain and France. In the list of Class 1.6. the most popular are [GIview 2023]: peaches, lemons, oranges, melons, kiwi, grapes, and nuts but also chestnuts, cherries, plums and strawberries. Among vegetables, beans, potatoes, asparagus, artichokes and lettuce are the most abundantly represented Class 1.3 “Cheese” is also a numerous product group (16,4%), where Italy, France and Spain also have the most products registered (almost 60% of total products from this group). The next classes are Class 1.1 and 1.2 related to

fresh meat and meat products. In these classes, quite numerous in addition to products from Italy and France are products from Portugal. Among fresh meat, poultry, lamb/lamb and beef dominate and most of the protected meat products are made from pork (among them are meat products such as hams and sausages) [GIview 2023].

## SUMMARY

The sustainability of the food system became one of the main focuses of the CAP of the EU in recent years, along with its resulting impacts at the local level. As a result, European Commission implemented and further develops the EU food quality schemes which represent prime examples of food production incorporating sustainable and traditional practices. Quality schemes are linked with registrations to protect products' established names and promote their unique characteristics linked to their geographical origin as well as traditional know-how. Quality designation for agricultural products and foodstuffs is widely used as an enabler for economic added value and to ensure the protection of intellectual property rights [Campos 2021]. Due to these actions, food producers and rural communities may get benefits from quality designation such as receiving a fair price for high-quality products, protection against counterfeit products, creation of new job opportunities, preserving cultural practices and many others.

As conducting research proved the role of agri-food products as protected products is growing, both in terms of value and quantity. This may indicate that food producers are becoming more active in submitting products to the protected product system, which is also beneficial to consumers. However, there are large disparities among EU countries in terms of producers' activity in this area. Most of the agri-food products on the register of protected products come from southern Europe countries. The structure of registered agri-food products is dominated by vegetables and fruits, cheeses, and meat and meat products.

The production of protected products can involve some profits. At the same time, producers face challenges, which include: the long and complicated process of registering new products, still relatively low consumer awareness of products covered by the EU quality system, gaining customers' interest in products and the illegal use of registered names. Hence, in order to further develop food quality labeling and increase the volume of production and sales of protected agricultural products, simplifying the process of registering new product names and stronger action against fraud and counterfeiting would be important. Emphasis should also be placed on producer cooperation and the simplification of legal forms of producer groups. It is also important to increase consumer awareness of label recognition and its importance.

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## PRODUKTY CHRONIONE W UNII EUROPEJSKIEJ – WYBRANE ASPEKTY EKONOMICZNE

Słowa kluczowe: Wspólna Polityka Rolna, systemy jakości żywności, oznaczenie geograficzne, nazwa pochodzenia, gwarantowana specjalność

ABSTRAKT. Celem artykułu jest przedstawienie sytuacji na rynku produktów chronionych w Unii Europejskiej (UE) w kontekście ich podaży. W celu ochrony nazw produktów, ich unikalnych cech oraz tradycji ich wytwarzania wprowadzono w Unii Europejskiej system jakości z oznaczeniami: Chroniona Nazwa Pochodzenia (CHNP), Chronione Oznaczenie Geograficzne (CHOG), Oznaczenie Geograficzne (OG) oraz Gwarantowana Tradycyjna Specjalność (GTS). W badaniach wykorzystano bazy danych UE dedykowane produktom chronionym, takie jak eAmbrosia, GIview oraz raporty Komisji Europejskiej. W celu ukazania zachodzących zmian wykorzystano dane za lata 2013-2023. Jak wynika z przeprowadzonych badań, rola chronionych produktów rolno-spożywczych zwiększa się, zarówno w ujęciu wartościowym, jak i ilościowym. Może to świadczyć o coraz większej aktywności producentów w zgłaszaniu produktów do systemu produktów chronionych, co jest korzystne również dla konsumentów. Istnieją jednak duże dysproporcje pomiędzy krajami UE pod tym względem. Większość produktów rolno-spożywczych znajdujących się w rejestrze produktów chronionych pochodzi z państw południowej Europy. W strukturze towarowej zarejestrowanych produktów rolno-spożywczych dominują takie produkty, jak warzywa i owoce, sery oraz mięso i jego przetwory.

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