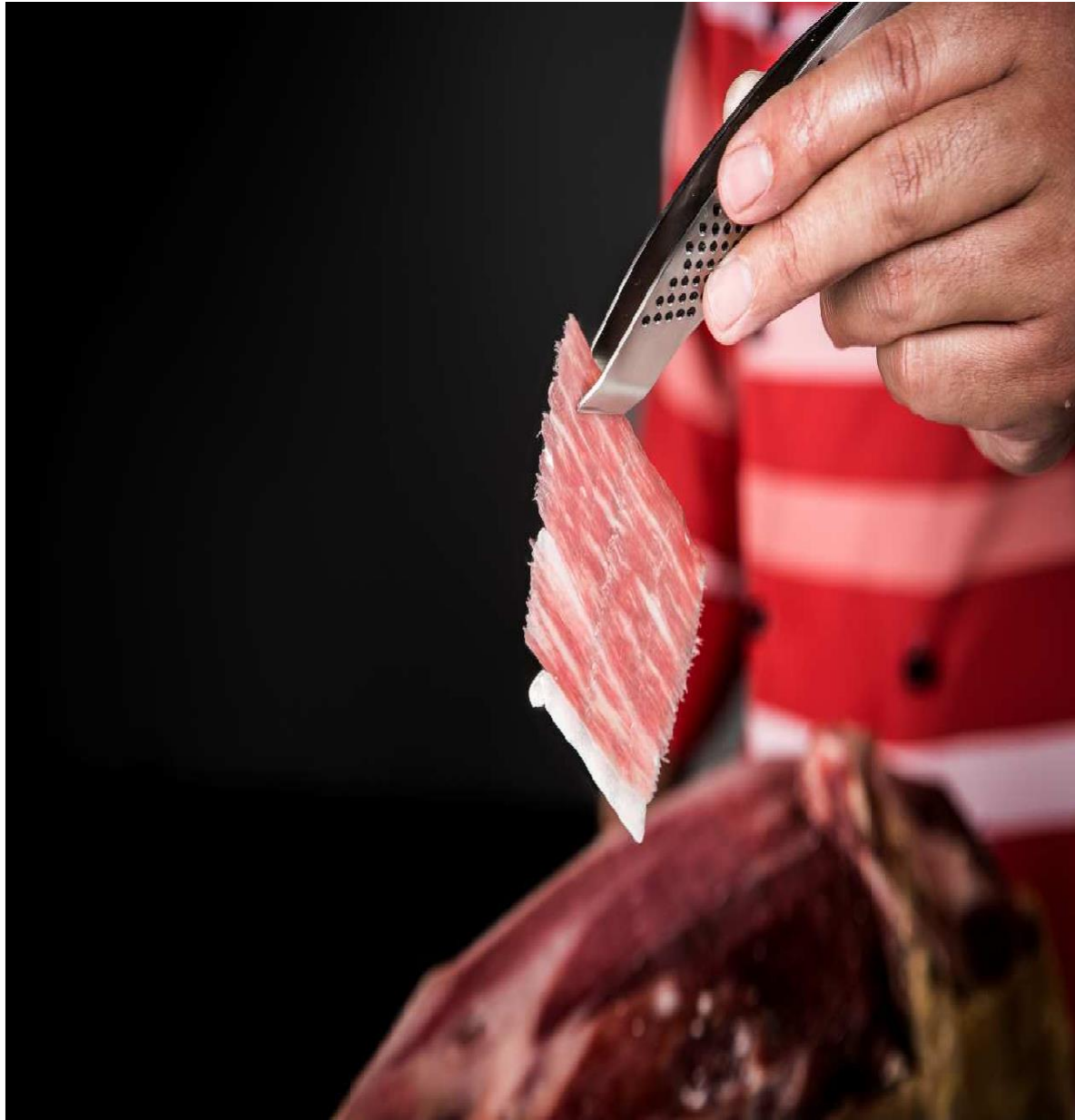


CAMPAIGN FINANCED  
WITH AID FROM  
THE EUROPEAN UNION



 **GUIJUELO**  
DENOMINACIÓN DE ORIGEN

**DOSSIER:**  
**IBERIAN HAM AND ITS TRACEABILITY**



THE EUROPEAN UNION SUPPORTS CAMPAIGNS THAT PROMOTE HIGH QUALITY AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS

## How to export Iberian ham. European Regulation and European Certificates.



Exporting Iberian ham to Europe is a lot simpler than exporting to markets outside of the European Union. The main difficulties with exportation can be found in the logistics. The European Union is one of the largest importers of food products, above all between the member states. Why? These are the reasons:

- Import regulations are standardised.
- The European Commission is the sole representative and authority for all member states.
- The European Commission acts as a representative for the importation of meat products from non-member countries. Specifically, the European Union's Directorate-General for Health and Consumer Protection. It ensures that imports of meat products always comply with the imposed conditions. The aim is to ensure that the quality of the meat always fulfils the minimum requirement which, in this case, is reasonably high.

In order to export Iberian ham to the EU, a veterinary certification is submitted by the appropriate authority of the country that the food product comes from. This authority is responsible for implementing inspections and necessary control measures in the production chain. That way, compliance with European regulations is guaranteed- an essential requirement to be a member of the list of authorised countries





for the product in question.

For that matter, those wishing to belong to the list of authorised countries must meet the following requirements:

- Have a veterinary authority at their disposal, which has the capacity to take charge of the food chain. That is to say, possess the power, structures and necessary means that are needed to carry out effective inspections to guarantee security and hygiene.
- Be a member of the World Organisation of Animal Health and meet the regulations and obligations of the organisation.
- Have a national authority at their disposal which can guarantee compliance with public hygiene and health requirements. This involves aspects concerning the establishment's facilities, equipment and slaughter process, quartering, storage and processing of the meat products to prevent contamination.
- The country must have a surveillance system which regulates the procedures related to waste from veterinary medicines, pesticides and other polluting chemicals.
- The establishment must obtain an authorisation to import by means of an inspection carried out by the appropriate authorities of the exporting country.
- Have approval from the Commission's Food and Veterinary Office in order to ensure compliance with the requirements.

Notwithstanding having all certificates and approvals, each load must be subjected to document and identity control. Furthermore, based on the type of product and the risks posed, imports may undergo physical checks and inspections.

Once all the permits and documentation are in order, then begins the process of organising the logistics of sending the Iberian ham to the country of destination. The product must be refrigerated during transportation in order to provide proper preservation. This whole process may mean a large effort for the businesses. From the abattoirs to the warehouses, all must undergo documentation and sanitary checks.

#### The traceability of Iberian ham

To give some background information, the Royal decree 1083/2001 of the 5<sup>th</sup> of October brought quality standards for Iberian ham, shoulder and pork loin produced in Spain into effect. The aim was to establish the characteristics concerning the quality and branding of Iberian products available on the market. Since the approval of the afore-mentioned Royal decree, various alterations have been made and several ministerial orders have





been passed for the development of Iberian pork products, thus resulting in a situation of regulation dispersion, where it was advisable to assemble all existing documents into one single regulation.

Subsequently, this led to the publication of the Royal decree 1469/2007, which endorsed quality regulations for Iberian meat, ham, shoulder and pork loin. This regulation also covered products from the quartered carcasses, which are sold as fresh pork. Also, it increased the range of products which could be labelled as Iberian, based on factors associated with the animals' feeding.

What is more, it introduced a list of municipalities with areas covered in oak trees, which are considered to be suitable for feeding Iberian pigs classified as "bellota" (acorn-fed). Additionally, the decree sought to strengthen the control mechanisms by means of reinforcing the provisions related to the actions of the independent organisations of control.

Finally, la Mesa de Ibérico (Iberian Association) was established to monitor and oversee the standardisation and development of everything related to the Iberian Quality Standard. Five years later some imbalances in the production sector were highlighted, which indicated that a new regulation on this matter was needed.

Also, difficulties were found in relation to how the products were accepted and recognised by consumers, resulting from an excessive range of labels, which may lead to confusion for the customer.

Furthermore, it was considered necessary to strengthen the traceability system, traditionally based on the self-monitoring of the producers.

In short, there was a need to modify certain aspects, which are listed below:

- One important aspect is a necessity to improve the racial purity of the animals whose meat is sold under the Quality Standard, as the breeding of pigs that are not included in the Genealogical List of the Iberian Pork Race with different races, may put the genetic heritage of Iberian pork at risk.
- When it comes to production patterns, in each one of them it was necessary to modify the conditions of handling and feeding of the animals, as well as reduce the stocking density established within the system of *dehesa* management, in order to avoid deterioration of the ecosystem.
- As for the animals fed on acorns, there is a plan to strengthen control over the phase of acorn feeding (*montanera*). First of all, each animal will have to be identified individually. Second of all, each area and enclosure where Iberian pigs





are fed with acorns and which are capable of producing ham qualified as “de bellota” (acorn-fed) will be identified on the “montanera” layer of the SIGPAC map. This precise system will replace the traditional way of localisation, based on the municipalities. These changes will guarantee that the feeding of the animals is truly based on acorns, and will contribute to the conservation of the Iberian *dehesa* ecosystem.





Finally, the Royal decree 4/2014, published on the 10<sup>th</sup> of January (Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Environment), passed the existing quality standard for Iberian meat, ham, shoulder and pork loin (BOE number 10, 11<sup>th</sup> January 2014), which was submitted to the information procedure in regards to the standards and technical regulations relating to the information society services. The procedure was planned in the Directive 98/34/CE by the European Parliament and Council, from the 22 of June, as well as the Royal decree of 1337/1999 on the 31<sup>st</sup> of July. The decree regulates the disclosure of information in terms of the standards and technical regulations concerning the information society services, which were incorporated into the Spanish legal system by the Directive.

It is necessary to recognise the work carried out by the managing bodies of different Designations of Origin when it comes to everything related to the production, control and launching of such an exceptional product as Iberian ham. Therefore, it is important to strengthen the cooperation between all sector agents in Europe and all related European institutions in order to establish the mechanisms and actions necessary to provide the European consumers with proper sanitary protection, adequate information and the highest quality of this beneficial product.

Regulation (EC) No. 1151/2012 of the European Parliament and Council of 21st November 2012 on quality schemes for agricultural products and foodstuffs establishes the definitions of the protected designation of origin (PDO). The regulation defines a PDO as: “a name which identifies a product originating in a specific place, region or, in exceptional cases, a country, whose quality or characteristics are essentially or exclusively due to a particular geographical environment with its inherent natural and human factors, and the production steps which all take place in the defined geographical area.” (MAPAMA)

The specifications of the protected designation of origin are updated according to the present quality regulation and its requirements are much more demanding. Only pigs which are 100% or 75% Iberian are accepted in the *dehesa* extensive production. The only accepted categories of pigs are acorn-fed (“de bellota”) and free-range pigs raised on a diet that includes pig feed (“cebo de campo”).

After assessing the natural conditions in which the production process takes place, each product is classified by a seal, designating the category to which it belongs.

A protected designation of origin means that traceability, origin, tradition of handling and production process, as well as an excellent quality of the final product are always guaranteed.



CAMPAIGN FINANCED  
WITH AID FROM  
THE EUROPEAN UNION



**GUIJUELO**  
DENOMINACIÓN DE ORIGEN



*(The content of this publication represents the opinion of its author only, who is the sole person responsible for it. The European Commission does not take responsibility for the use of the information presented)*



THE EUROPEAN UNION SUPPORTS CAMPAIGNS THAT PROMOTE HIGH QUALITY AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS