

SPECIFICATION

COUNCIL REGULATION (EC) No 510/2006 on protected geographical indications and protected designations of origin

“Isle of Man Queenies”

EC No:

PDO (✓) PGI ()

This document sets out the main elements of the product specification for information purposes.

Responsible department in the Member State

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2. Group

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Composition: Producers: Fishing Vessels 25 Processors:3

3. Type of product

Class Group 1.7: Fresh fish, molluscs and crustaceans and products derived there from.

4. Specification

(summary of requirements under Article 4(2) of Regulation (EC) No 510/2006)

4.1 Name: Isle of Man Queenie

4.2 Description:

Isle of Man Queenies is the name given to queen scallops caught in Isle of Man waters.

The queen scallop (*Aequipecten opercularis*) is a medium sized species of scallop, an edible '[marine bivalve mollusc](#)' in the family [Pectinidae](#). The shell can vary in colour including yellow, orange, red, brown and purple and grows to a maximum of 90mm in diameter. There are some 19-22 broad radiating ribs on both halves, with numerous concentric growth rings running across the shell. The meat or main body of the queenie is far smaller than a king scallop; it is a circular muscle, cylindrical in shape 20mm in diameter and 15mm in height. The meat is opaque/cream in colour; a two part orange/white, crescent shaped roe is attached to the body. When cooked the queenie is firm and smooth with a meaty texture which remains moist. Its taste is uniquely sweet and distinctive from that of other scallops with a delicate flavour and a mild taste of the sea. The queenie can be served with the roe left intact or removed.

Manx Queenies are caught in Isle of Man territorial waters mainly by Manx registered vessels although other registered fishing vessels who hold the appropriate licence may also fish for them and land them into the Isle of Man if they choose to . They are subsequently landed and processed on the Isle of Man.

Queenies are sold

- Naturally packed 'dry' (un soaked)
- Or individually quick frozen (IQF)
- Or as fresh or frozen 'half shell' (still attached to half of the shell)

- Loose or vacuum packed – depending on customer requirements
- Market size and weight depending on customer requirements

4.3 Geographical area:

The Isle of Man

The Isle of Man Queenie is fished in extensive beds within the Manx Territorial Sea. This area of 3,917 square kilometres legally extends to 12 nautical miles or the median line from the Isle of Man base line.

4.4 Proof of origin:

Fishing and Traceability

Each landing can be traced through the production process to the retailed queenie product.

Skippers complete daily log sheets;

- (i) Isle of Man Log Record-Submitted to Department of Environment, Food and Agriculture (a legislative requirement)
- (ii) Shellfish Movement Document-Submitted to Shellfish Processors Association and the Department of Environment, Food and Agriculture, which has responsibility for public health issues.

Each log records;

- (i) Date
- (ii) Port sailed from and landed
- (iii) Times sailed and landed
- (iv) Areas fished
- (v) Time fished
- (vi) Number of bags
- (vii) Live weight in kilos
- (viii) Details of fishing gear used, including mesh size

Each vessel is provided with bags clearly labelled with the name of the boat.

Catch is brought to the factory by lorry and chilled prior to processing. The factory cleans each vessel's catch individually, the catch is weighed, graded and payment is made according to the meat yield and average count per kilo.

Shucked (opened by hand with and removed from the shell with a flat metal tool) queenies are briefly washed (a lengthy washing process causes the product to absorb water, increasing weight but decreasing the quality of the end product) the queenies are packaged, with batch and boat number printed on each label.

4.5 Method of Production

Queenies are a fast growing long lived species with a maximum lifespan that rarely exceeds five years. They reach market size of 55mm within 2-3 years depending on the available micro-algae feed from the water column. Isle of Man Queenies are not cultured or bred, their lifecycle is totally natural and their presence in the waters of the Isle of Man has been record for over 160 years.

The 'Queenie' name first arose as a diminutive name 'queen scallop' and has been widely used by the people of the Isle of Man since late 1800's.

Fishing / Harvesting the Queenies:

Queenies can settle out in huge numbers, and unlike many fisheries, recruitment to the queenie fishery is very reliable, although it can still vary greatly in different years..

Although there are restrictions on when queenies can be caught - a 3 months closed season March-May inclusive - fishing is naturally self regulated; being determined by water temperature. When the water temperatures increase the queenies rise more readily in the water column when disturbed by the net, making them easier to capture. Lower temperatures makes fishing for queenies unprofitable, consequently the Islands queenie season traditionally starts on the 1st June when vessels switch from the winter dredge fishery for great scallops (*Pecten maximus*). In years with low water temperature however the season may not start until the middle or late June.

When harvesting the fishermen use a light 80mm gauge net, which ensures minimum impact on the queenie and minimal contact with the seabed. The practise of using the 80mm net ensures the Queenies are mature when harvested, being between a minimum age of two to three years old. This method allows for younger

smaller queenies to pass through the net thus ensuring the regeneration and sustainability of the queenie beds. The queenie occur in the highest densities in and around queenie beds, these are natural, wild fishery areas found on the seabed.

The vessels, light demersal trawls, currently used are very similar to those used when the industry first began in 1969. Queenies are fished by 'day boats'. No fishing with trawls for Isle of Man Queenies takes place between 20.00 and 06.00 hours, as governed by the Sea Fisheries (Queen Scallop Fishing) Byelaws 2010.

Capture in demersal trawls ensures the queenies are alive when landed, with no grit inside and minimum shell damage. Currently motorized fishing vessels varying in size between 10m – 16.5m are used to fish for queenies, although smaller boats can be used. The light 80 mm mesh nets are towed on warps (strong steel cables) from the stern of the vessel. The net passes over the seabed and is kept open by trawl doors that use water pressure, to pull the net apart. A rubber covered rope (the foot rope) makes contact with the seabed, and queenies react to this rope by swimming up off the seabed into the path of the net. The trawl lasts between 1-2 hours at a speed of 1 knot; the net is then hauled onto the deck of the vessel and lowered into the vessel by the crew. Mechanical winches are used to haul and shoot these nets.

The fished Queenies are sorted immediately after capture either by hand, or passed through a small mechanical grader and washer set to grade at no less than 55mm and the catch bagged, generally into 38kg sacks, although bag weights are not mandatory. Undersized or poor quality queenies are returned to the sea alive- research has indicated that they subsequently have very high survival rates.. The skipper samples until a quality bed is discovered. Queenies are assessed by size and a sample will be opened to ensure both meat and roe meet the quality requirements.

Production stages:

- a. Manx Queenies are trawl caught using 80mm-90mm gauge nets.
The catch is washed and sorted aboard the vessel
- b. Queenies are iced or chilled onboard the vessel within two hours of capture.

- c. Registered fishing vessels land their catch at harbours in Peel, Ramsey, Douglas, Port Erin and Port St Mary.
- d. The queenies are transported by covered lorry; within a two hour period of landing, to an Isle of Man processors factory where they are chilled overnight.
- e. Queenies are hand processed (shucked) the following day using a flat metal knife.
- f. Meat removed and washed twice by hand - washing is very fast, to prevent water being absorbed by the meat, which reduces quality
- g. Roe left intact or roe removed dependant on market.
- h. Queenie meat is weighed
- i. Naturally packed - Dry (un soaked) or individually quick frozen at - 35°C

(ii) Half Shell

Stages (a-c as above)

- d. Hand processed (shucked) opened using a flat metal tool; half shell discarded, along with the gills, stomach and mantle
- e. Meat and roe left on shell
- f. Frozen or fresh

Queenies are frozen as individually quick frozen ("IQF") units.

Packaging

(i) Fresh

Vacuum packed according to customer requirements, labelled and exported.

(ii) Frozen

Individually quick frozen (IQF) queenie are packed to customer requirements.

4.6 Link:

Natural History

Queenies are hermaphrodites. The queenies ripen for spawning two or three times a year depending on water temperature and feeding conditions. They simultaneously release eggs and sperm into the surrounding water and fertilization is external. The presence of eggs and sperm in the water stimulates other queens to spawn. Fertilized eggs develop into a larva that rises up into the water column, and passes through a series of larval stages, feeds by filtering phytoplankton. After a month in the water column, larva develop a shell and settle on the sea bed or onto other species growing above suitable seabed habitat. Although initially attached to substrate by a byssal thread (a filament used by molluscs to attach themselves to rocks, substrates or the sea bed) the individual soon becomes a free living adult.

Environment

The Gulf Stream moderates the Island's climate which benefits from a warming temperature that provides a temperate climate. Summers tend to be cool and fairly sunny, while the winters are mild and wet with very little frost and snow.

The Isle of Man Queenie is fished in extensive beds within the Manx Territorial Sea. Queenies have distinct habitat preferences and live in aggregated distributions (beds) around the Isle of Man, their relative immobility has resulted in the comparatively unchanged geographical position of the beds. Beds may be permanent aggregations, precise in their location and separated by clearly demarked areas that are unsuitable for scallops.

The combination of environmental conditions - water quality, temperature, strong tidal flows and availability of suitable planktonic food, mean that queenie densities in the Isle of Man Territorial Sea are consistently high, and that the fast growing meats produced are particularly succulent.

Queenie beds have been documented in the Isle of Man for many generations. Early references to the occurrence of abundant populations of queen scallops around the Isle of Man are cited in *Marine Fauna of the Isle of Man* (Moore, 1937). There are a limited number of major areas within the geographical range where population is sufficiently abundant to support a commercial fishery. Such areas or grounds are usually widely separated by areas that are environmentally unsuitable for the

species. Within each ground there are usually a number of regions or beds which can be of an area of several km², where scallop abundance is higher than elsewhere.

Water quality and temperature

The Queenie beds in the Manx territorial sea are surrounded by high quality waters in respect of both organic and inorganic pollutants. Basic environmental sampling of seawaters off the Isle of Man extends back to the early twentieth century. As scientific advances progressed further environmental and biological parameters have been monitored and presently the Isle of Man government monitors many variables including nutrients, bacteria, phytoplankton and phytoplankton toxins.

The tidal range around the Isle of Man is the greatest in Western Europe. This tidal range, coupled with the relatively shallow seabed surrounding the Island, means that exceptionally strong tides flow around the Isle of Man. Whilst presenting unique challenges to fishermen using light trawls, these tides also mean that Isle of Man Queenies have a constant source of planktonic food sweeping past them, assisting their fast growth rates, and distribution of their planktonic larval stage.

The Isle of Man can demonstrate consistently, high water quality standards with scientific research that dates back to 1904. These standards meet the European environmental quality objectives.

Tradition

Fishing has been a traditional industry in Isle of Man, with herring fishing well established and organised in the 1500's. Queenie fishing originally started in the mid 1800's when they were used as bait in long line fishing for cod.

During this time queenie beds provided a prolific feeding ground for the shoals of Cod. As fish stocks diminished in the 1960's, Manx fishermen began to explore the possibility of fishing for queenies. In 1969 the first commercially caught queenies were landed in Peel and quickly became recognised as a delicacy.

The island's queenie beds have been extended names such as: Lower and higher Chickens, Warts Bank and Burrow Head.

The Manx fishing fleet extended to approximately 60 vessels in 1971 with a peak in production being recorded at this time of approximately 7,500 tonnes (caught live weight). The majority of this catch was exported directly to America.

In the early 80's the Isle of Man began to create new markets in France and Spain, for which queenie was sold as a 'roe on' product. At the present time queenies are sold to markets in the United Kingdom, France, Italy and Spain. Processors are looking for entrance into new prolific quality markets on a continual basis.

The first Manx marine biologist Edward Forbes became world renowned for his study of seabed populations. Of the Queenie (which he referred to as *Pecten opercularis* as they did at that time) he wrote "frequent, being the chief inhabitants of the scallop banks". He also states that *Pecten opercularis* are "used for food when cooked". (Forbes, 1838)

There is strong evidence to suggest that the Queenie grounds are self sustaining, this is discussed in detail by Sinclair et al (Sinclair, 1985) evidence for *Aequipecten opercularis*, *Pecten maximus* and *Placopecten magellanicus*. They note that, for each of these species, the major fishing grounds are relatively few in number, of characteristic absolute abundance, precise in their geographical location and have been persistent in these locations for very long periods, all of which, they believe, strongly implies that the populations on these grounds are self-sustaining. (Sinclair, 1985)

4.7 Inspection body:

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