# APPENDIX H.
# PAVÉ DE L'ARRATS — PROTECTED CHEESE PRODUCT SPECIFICATION

This appendix is available for download at:

https://greybarnfarm.com/publishing/hippo-dairy

***Cahier des charges — Pavé de l’Arrats (IGP)***

The following is the operating specification for the protected Gascon cheese Pavé de l’Arrats. It sets out the name, territory, qualifying milk, manufacturing method, maturation conditions, product character and controls by which a producer may use the protected designation. It should be read with the cheesemaking principles in Chapter 17, the variety description in Chapter 18, and the designation framework in Chapter 19. The numerical ranges below define conformity to this cheese, not physiological averages for hippopotamus milk.

## H.1. Name, category and product description

| Element | Specification |
|---|---|
| Protected name | Pavé de l'Arrats — indication géographique protégée (IGP); protected geographical indication (PGI). |
| Product category | Cheese made exclusively from milk of the common hippopotamus (*Hippopotamus amphibius*); semihard, pressed, matured cheese. |
| External form | Compact rectangular block, with flat or slightly convex faces and rounded edges. Sale weight of an intact cheese: 0.8–3.0 kg. |
| Rind and paste | Continuous natural rind, pale ochre to warm brown, dry or lightly brushed; uniform ivory-to-straw paste, supple and sliceable. A few small mechanical openings are acceptable. |
| Sensory identity | Clean cultured-milk and hay-like aromas, followed by mild nutty and savory notes. The paste is resilient rather than brittle, without dominant ammonia, rancidity or burning acidity. |
| Composition at release | Dry matter at least 50% by a validated gravimetric method; the minimum maturation period and the characteristic form and sensory identity must also be satisfied. |

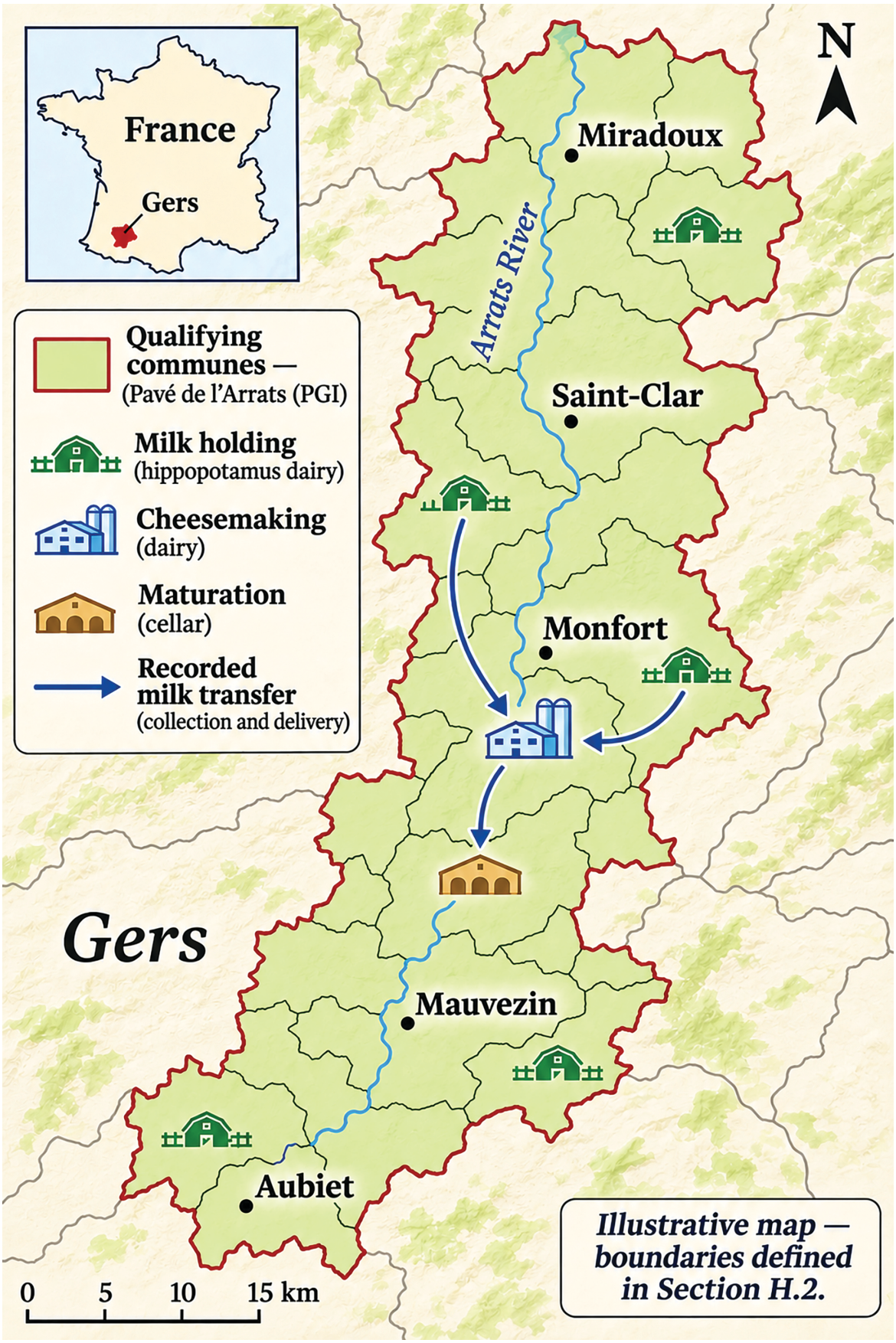
Cheeses sold as portions retain the identification and traceability of the original block. Smoking, applied wax or colored coatings, and flavor additions that change the defined character are not permitted. Ordinary variation in natural rind appearance does not by itself constitute nonconformity.

## H.2. Delimited geographical area

The production area is the whole administrative territory, as officially bounded, of the following communes in the department of Gers: Aubiet, Castelnau-Barbarens, Lussan, L'Isle-Arné, Saint-Sauvy, Mauvezin, Monfort, Homps, Labrihe, Saint-Antonin, Solomiac, Avezan, Tournecoupe, Saint-Clar, Saint-Créac, Saint-Léonard, Plieux, Miradoux and Peyrecave. These communes describe a continuous agricultural corridor associated with the Arrats valley; a premises address is assessed against the relevant official commune boundary, not against distance from the riverbank.

Milk production, cheese manufacture and maturation must all occur within this area. Transport between approved premises in the area is permitted under recorded lot identity and appropriate temperature control. Cutting, packaging and sale may occur outside the area when the operator can preserve and demonstrate the cheese's origin and compliance.

The perimeter is defined by whole communes so a producer, inspector or carrier can verify an address without interpreting a river-distance rule. Outlying parcels belonging to a farm based within the area do not automatically qualify: the animals producing the milk must be kept on an eligible holding within the prescribed limits. Temporary milk storage outside the area is not a qualifying production stage and is not permitted for IGP-designated lots.




Schematic map of the Pavé de l'Arrats IGP geographical area in Gers, showing the specified communes along the Arrats valley, eligible farm and cheese-making locations, and the link between milk collection and maturation sites.

## H.3. Milk source and eligibility

Only milk from healthy lactating female common hippopotamuses belonging to the registered Gascon dairy breeding population is eligible. Each cow must have a verified permanent identity linked to the herdbook, the producing holding and the current milk-collection authorization. Milk from other species, from unverified females, or from collections under a veterinary withholding restriction is excluded; mixed-species milk is not permitted.

Farms must keep the livestock husbandry and calf-access records described in Chapters 10–14. Commercial collection must not impair dependent calf nursing. Where animals are moved between holdings, the receiving farm verifies identity, health eligibility and residence within the delimited area before their milk enters an IGP lot. Feed and pasture records support the regional farming history, but no unsupported universal ration or minimum native-forage percentage is imposed by this specification.

The supplying farm notifies the dairy of any calving, health or treatment event affecting collection eligibility before its next delivery. Milk collected during temporary identification uncertainty is held outside protected production until the cow and lot can be reconciled. A new farm may supply only after the operator has been listed and the required conformity checks have been completed; shared membership of a cooperative does not itself establish eligibility.

## H.4. Evidence of origin and traceability

| Control point | Required evidence |
|---|---|
| Individual cow and farm | Permanent RFID or other accepted identifier, herdbook reference, holding identifier, lactation status, treatment and withdrawal clearance. |
| Milk collection | Date, time, contributing animals or defined group, collected quantity, acceptance result, cooling record and dispatch/receipt identification. |
| Manufacture | Received milk-lot identifiers, batch number, date of vatting, starter/coagulant records, manufacturing operator and weights. |
| Maturation and dispatch | Location, start date, temperature/humidity checks, condition records, portion/pack identifiers and customer destination. |

A finished cheese lot must be traceable backwards to its milk suppliers and forwards to each buyer supplied. The quantity of milk received, cheese made, material rejected and cheese dispatched must be reconcilable. An automated station read is useful evidence, but a missing or conflicting identification is resolved by documented staff verification before milk is assigned to a protected lot.

For example, where a single vat contains accepted deliveries from three holdings, the batch record identifies all three incoming lots and the cheeses molded from that vat. If one delivery is later rejected or recalled, every associated cheese can be found, held and evaluated. Records must preserve the link even after cheeses move to a cooperative cellar, are divided for retail sale or have their outer packaging replaced.

## H.5. Manufacturing method

| Stage | Mandatory method and limits |
|---|---|
| Milk reception and treatment | Milk is examined and accepted under the dairy hygiene plan. Use a documented, validated pasteurizing treatment; raw-milk manufacture is not included in this specification. No milk or milk solids of another species may be added. |
| Culturing and coagulation | Add suitable food-grade lactic starter and compatible coagulating enzyme. Record culture, coagulant, vat identity, temperature and coagulation outcome. |
| Curd working | Cut the formed curd, stir and, if needed, warm gently without exceeding 42 °C. Drain to produce a coherent, pressable curd; record observable setting and draining performance. |
| Molding and pressing | Place curd in rectangular molds and press with controlled loading until a self-supporting block is formed. Record mold size, date and pressing method. |
| Salting | Salt by controlled dry application or food-grade brine, with a record of method and lot. The salt treatment must be repeatable and consistent with the defined sensory character. |
| Maturation | Mature for at least 45 complete days after unmolding in an identified cellar in the geographical area, normally at 8–13 °C and 85–95% relative humidity, with measured records and documented corrective actions. |

These requirements regulate the intended result rather than promising a fixed cheese yield. Milk composition and curd behavior must be verified for each production lot. Chapter 17 explains the coagulation and ripening mechanisms; the present document defines which practices and finished characteristics qualify under this protected name.

The affineur inspects the rind and records corrective action when condensation, unwanted growth, excessive drying or mechanical damage threatens conformity. The forty-five-day minimum is a release threshold, not a promise that every cheese becomes suitable for sale on that day. A cheese failing the required dry-matter, appearance or sensory checks remains under evaluation or loses the right to the protected name, even after sufficient time has elapsed.

## H.6. Link between the cheese and its geographical origin

The geographical link rests on the established reputation of a compact pressed cheese made by the small Gascon dairy hippopotamus holdings of the Arrats valley, together with the continuity of local milk collection, curd-pressing skill and cellar maturation. The rectangular pavé developed as a convenient form for handling and dividing cheese while maintaining a supple, sliceable interior. Its name, form and restrained matured character are recognized together in the region's trade.

The Arrats area links milk producers, specialist dairies and affineurs within a manageable regional circuit, permitting recurring exchange of milk-quality information and adjustment of the pressing and maturation work to the material actually received. This reputation and organized know-how, rather than an unsupported assertion of unique milk chemistry, provide the defining geographical connection for the IGP. No claim is made that every common hippopotamus raised in Gascony produces milk of a prescribed chemical composition.

## H.7. Labeling and commercial presentation

The protected name must appear as "Pavé de l'Arrats" on cheese labels and sales documents. For products marketed in the Union, the IGP/PGI Union symbol is displayed with the name in the same field of vision;

the responsible producer or operator is also identified in the same field, subject to the applicable small-packaging exception. Food information must identify the milk as hippopotamus milk, declare the milk allergen, give the necessary lot identification, and meet general food-labeling requirements. Neither a breed name nor a map graphic may replace the exact protected name.

Retail portions may be wrapped by an operator outside the valley, but the lot number and original eligible producer or affineur must remain recoverable. Material failing the specification may be sold under a truthful unprotected description only where food law permits sale; it may not be presented by the protected name, by an imitation of its label, or with a misleading translation of the designation.

## H.8. Verification, nonconformity and retained records

| Verification | Responsibility and consequence |
|---|---|
| Operator self-check | The producer verifies eligible milk, origin, process logs, release criteria, and accurate labels before marketing each lot. |
| Independent compliance control | An approved control body verifies production records, premises, product characteristics and traceability under the applicable control plan and official oversight. |
| Nonconformity | Milk from an ineligible animal, production or maturation outside the area, too-short aging, or unresolvable lot identity excludes that product from IGP marketing. A food-safety failure also triggers the separate food-law hold, withdrawal or recall process. |

The producer group maintains the specification and coordinates its members but does not replace official controls. Records of operator status, milk receipt, production, cellar conditions, nonconformities and dispatch are held in a retrievable form for the applicable statutory and control-plan periods. Protected designation compliance is verified separately from general food safety and from the authorization to keep the animals or operate the dairy.

The control plan includes examination of farm and herd eligibility, sampling of milk-to-vat traceability, verification of site addresses against the delimitation, scrutiny of maturation records and examination of representative finished cheeses. An operator whose evidence is incomplete cannot remedy the defect merely by a favorable tasting result. Corrective action must address the source of the failure, and the affected lot remains outside the IGP channel until the competent control decision permits its return.

Legal basis: Regulation (EU) 2024/1143, especially Articles 36–39 and 46–50; Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2025/26, notably Article 6 on geographical delimitation; Regulation (EU) 2017/625 on official controls; and applicable French INAO provisions.