



## Geographical Indication Product Database - Step 1-

### **Emmentaler** **(Emmentaler Switzerland)**

#### **SOURCE :**

**Authors : Florian  
HAUDER, Erik  
ThÉVENOD-  
MOTTET**

**Institution : OIC /  
AGRIDEA**

**Date : 04.09.06**

#### **DESCRIPTION :**

##### **1. NAME OF PRODUCT : Emmentaler (Emmentaler Switzerland)**

**2. COUNTRY AND REGION IN THE COUNTRY:** Switzerland, German-speaking part of Switzerland (except Grisons and some other little cantons), that is to say mainly Central and North East Switzerland.

##### **3. TYPE OF PRODUCT : (including the possible substitutes and imitations of the product)**

Hard cheese made from raw milk, with numerous and quite big holes.

Emmentaler is considered as a generic type of cheese in many countries (Codex norm), for example as "Swiss cheese" in the USA.

##### **4. DESCRIPTION OF THE PRODUCT AND ITS AREA (including its specific characteristics, conditions of production, main differences with the substitutes) :**

Big pieces of 80 to 120 kilos, with a specific convex shape due to propionic fermentation. That specific fermentation at high temperature (during some weeks) is also responsible for the taste of Emmentaler.

Emmentaler originates from the Bern region of Emmental; the present area of production is characterised by wet pastures of northern Alps. Emmentaler is exclusively produced in factories in the hills region.

The main differences with substitutes is the exclusive use of raw milk (without silage, processing within 24 hours, no additive), the small scale of factories (often one factory per village), the round traditional shape of the pieces, the natural maturing and the minimal duration of maturing (4 months).

##### **5. LINK WITH THE GEOGRAPHICAL AREA (tradition, know how, reputation, soil, climate, etc.):**

That special type of cheese originate from the heart of the present region of production in Switzerland, since centuries. It was previously linked with the production of pigs (source of the propionic bacteria). A lot of cheese-makers emigrated in many other regions in the world and exported their know-how in making that type of cheese.

##### **6. PRODUCTION SYSTEM / SUPPLY CHAIN (some data about the number of producers, processors, market structure..) :**

4'500 milk producers, 210 cheese factories, 20 maturing firms are constituting the supply-chain for a yearly production of 32'000 tons.

Before the collapse of the Swiss Cheese Union in 1999, the production of Emmentaler Switzerland was of 56'000 tons per year!

##### **7. MARKET AND REPUTATION (size, price premium, attractiveness, growth) :**

The first export market is Italy.

Emmentaler Switzerland has not a clear identity abroad, due to the number and volume of the substitutes which are generally much cheaper and of lower quality; for example, the most part of European production of Emmental is made with bloc pieces maturing under plastic covers and not with traditional wheels and natural surface.

Another problem is in the use of the name (or any associated idea) for grated cheese, which is not perceived as a quality connotation.

##### **7. APPLICANT / HOLDER (IF ANY) :**

The interprofessional body is ES (Emmentaler Switzerland) and gather almost all the supply-chain; it has applied for



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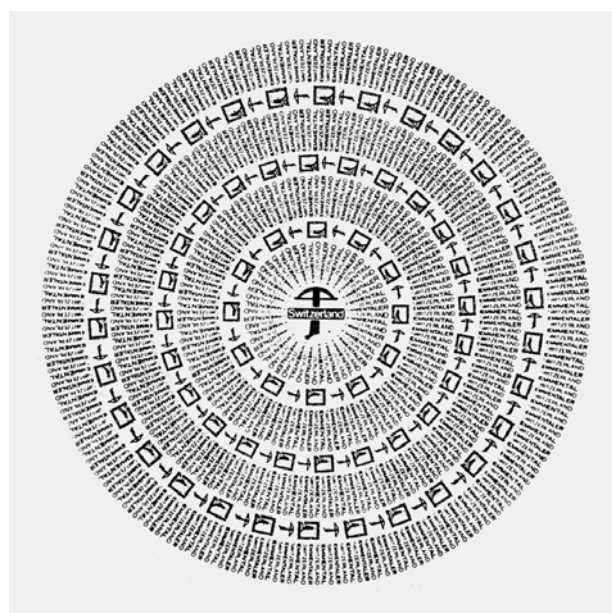
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### **Emmentaler (Emmentaler Switzerland)**

a PDO in 2000. The PDO has not yet been registered due to several oppositions from Switzerland and foreign countries. In the moment, the case is treated by the Federal Court (last national judicial level). Nevertheless, since the 01.05.05, every member of ES has to fulfil the requirements of the code of specification associated to the PDO application; this is controlled by a certification body. As soon as the PDO would be registered, the Emmentaler production could be certified. Emmentaler Switzerland as a collective mark could be certified but some problems of labelling still prevent it.

Due to the difficulties of obtaining the registration of the PDO, ES tried to register a trademark which induces a relation with PDO (AEC, Appellation Emmentaler Contrôlée, is close to AOC, Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée – PDO in French...). That mark is only used in intermediary labelling, not on the labelling visible to consumers (except when the cheese piece is entire), because ES knows that such a trademark would raise oppositions from the authorities in charge of controlling the foodstuffs.




Old collective trademarks for Emmentaler Switzerland; the left one represents the paper sheet which is put on the entire piece of cheese, and was registered by the Swiss Cheese Union in 1983 (transferred to ES in 2004); the right one was registered by the Swiss Ministry of Economy in 2000.

# EMMENTALER.

## SWITZERLAND

Present logo in use for Emmentaler Switzerland; ES has applied for its registration as a collective trademark in 2001, but the registration process is suspended until the final decision on the PDO application.

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AEC logo which is presently applied by ES for registration as a collective trademark.

Emmentaler is presently a protected denomination in Switzerland through the provisions (geographical area and specifications of the product) of the Federal Ordinance on Animal Foodstuffs (of 23 November 2005), previously in the Ordinance on the Designations of Cheeses (last one being of 10 December 1981).

Emmentaler is on the list B in the Stresa Convention of 1951.

There is also a standard of the Codex Alimentarius since 1967 for Emmental, recognizing Switzerland as the country of origin of the designation and requiring that any use of the designation for products not coming from Switzerland be accompanied by the indication of the country of production.

**RELEVANCE : Why is this case important for research in general and for SINER-GI in particular ?**

The case of Emmentaler Switzerland has a lot of special aspects:

- it is one of the most well-known GIs worldwide
- it has been and is still concerned by several frames of protection
- the production has enormously decreased after the end of the “State economy system” in 1999
- 75% of the production is for exportation, whereas Switzerland is, in the world, the country where the consumption of cheese is the higher per inhabitant
- the registration (as a PDO) process is one of the most disputed
- imitations, substitutes and misuses are numerous and threatening

**CATEGORY :**

☐ Origin Product

☐ GI product

☒ Recognized GI