



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

The Director-General

Brussels,
DG/WB/I.3/CCL/RW D(2023)

By registered letter with acknowledgment of receipt

Mr Anas AMBRI
Andrea Zaimi 5
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Advance copy by email :

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Dear Sir,

Subject: Your applications for access to documents – Cases 2023/118 and 125

We refer to your requests for access to documents, registered on 6/01/2023 under the above-mentioned references numbers.

Please note that due to the wide scope of your request, covering also areas falling under the responsibility of other Directorates-General, parts of your request have been attributed to other Directorates-General¹. This reply relates only to the documents held by DG AGRI. You will receive the replies from the other Directorates-General on documents held by them.

You request access to documents which contain the following information:

Case 2023/118:

- 1. *correspondence between the EU commission and Bureau Veritas, leading up to its appointment in July 2015*
- 2. *agendas and notes taken during meetings with representatives of Cypriot authorities, representatives from cheesemakers, cattlefarmers or dairy producers association (be they from the Greek Cypriot or Turkish Cypriot communities), or with Bureau Veritas, for the period from October 2020 until December 2022.*

Case 2023/125:

¹ DG SANTE case 2023/453, DG REFORM

- 1. copies of reports submitted by Bureau Veritas in its role as the body in charge of control tasks provided by the Regulation mentioned above, for the years 2021 and 2022
- 2. copies of objections to Cyprus' application for PDO designation for Halloumi, including those sent by Finland and six natural or legal persons that reside or are based in Cyprus, submitted to the Commission and forwarded to Cypriot authorities
- 3. copies of documents shared by German authorities to EU Agro Fraud Network, as part of the alert raised on July 5 2022 regarding Halloumi products that do not meet the required EU standards under its PDO.
- 4. copy of the response received from Cypriot authorities regarding the alert raised on July 5 2022.
- 5. notes and agendas of meetings conducted with representatives of Cypriot authorities, with representatives from Cypriot industry associations (including from the Turkish Cypriot community), or with Bureau Veritas, for the period from October 2020 until December 2022, on the topic of PDO certification of Halloumi.
- 6 correspondence with representatives of Cypriot authorities, with representatives from Cypriot industry associations (including from the Turkish Cypriot community), or with Bureau Veritas, for the period from October 2020 until December 2022, on the topic of PDO certification of Halloumi.

As regards point 1 of your application 2023/118, DG AGRI has not identified any documents in its possession. As regards point 2, the documents identified are the same documents as identified for point 5 of the application 2023/125.

Concerning point 1 of the application 2023/125, DG AGRI has not identified any documents in its possession. Points 3 and 4 of application 2023/125 concern DG SANTE and point 6, and partly point 5, concern DG REFORM. As mentioned above, this part of your request will be treated by these Directorates-General and you will receive separate replies.

For points 2 and 5, DG AGRI has identified 56 documents with numerous annexes. You will find enclosed the list of them, as well as copies of the documents that we were able to disclose, taking into account the following considerations.

I - Full disclosure

Full access is given to a certain number of documents, as well as to some annexes of other documents.

II - Partial access – personal data redacted.

Some of the identified documents contained personal data and have been redacted for the purpose of protecting privacy and the integrity of the individual, pursuant to Article 4(1)(b) of Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001. These documents contain:

- the names/initials and contact information of Commission staff members not pertaining to the senior management;
- the names/initials and contact details of other natural persons.
- handwritten signatures/abbreviated signatures of natural persons.

Article 9(1)(b) of the Data Protection Regulation does not allow the transmission of these personal data, except if you prove that it is necessary to have the data transmitted to you for a specific purpose in the public interest and where there is no reason to assume that

the legitimate interests of the data subject might be prejudiced. In your request, you do not express any particular interest to have access to these personal data nor do you put forward any arguments to establish the necessity to have the data transmitted for a specific purpose in the public interest.

Consequently, we conclude that, pursuant to Article 4(1)(b) of Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001, access cannot be granted to the personal data contained in the requested documents, as the need to obtain access thereto for a purpose in the public interest has not been substantiated and there is no reason to think that the legitimate interests of the individuals concerned would not be prejudiced by disclosure of the personal data concerned.

III – Total or partial refusal of access, for reasons other than the protection of personal data disclosure of some of the documents requested is prevented by exception to the right of access laid down in Article 4 of this Regulation (see in the enclosed list the numbers of documents fully refused, and of those, for which only some annexes are refused).

The documents, which you seek to obtain, relate to the adoption of the Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2021/591 of 12 April 2021 registering the name ‘Χαλλούμι’ (Halloumi)/‘Hellim’ as protected designation of origin (PDO).

The legality of this Regulation has been challenged before the General Court of the European Union (case T-361/21 (Halloumi/Hellim)) by producers of the cheese ‘Χαλλούμι’ (Halloumi)/‘Hellim’. The Court is therefore analysing and assessing the legality of the Regulation by which the Commission registered the above-mentioned name as a PDO. The documents requested relate to the procedure and assessment carried out which led to the adoption of the regulation of registration and relate also to the exchanges occurred after that registration, in connection with the implementation stage of that Regulation. The matter is of utmost political sensitivity, since it is relevant to the process of reunification of the island.

In that context, disclosure of these documents would undermine the protection of court proceedings, and has to be refused in accordance with Article 4(2), second indent, of Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001. It is necessary to preserve the calm and untroubled character of the proceedings before the Court. The serenity of the proceedings could be affected by the release of information related to the registration procedure and consequent implementation.

We have considered whether partial access could be granted to the documents requested. However, at present, it must be concluded that the entirety of the requested documents falls under the above-mentioned exception.

The exceptions laid down in Article 4(2) of Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001 apply unless there is an overriding public interest in disclosure of the documents. In the present case no overriding public interest can be detected that would lead to granting the access to the requested documents.

In accordance with Article 7(2) of Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001, you are entitled to make a confirmatory application requesting the Commission to review this position.

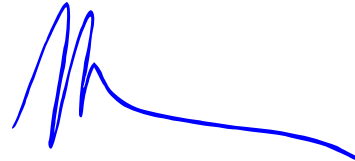
Such a confirmatory application should be addressed within 15 working days upon receipt of this letter to the Secretary-General of the Commission at the following address:

European Commission

Secretariat-General
Transparency, Document Management & Access to Documents (SG.C.1)
BERL 7/076
B-1049 Bruxelles

or by email to: sg-xxxxxxx@xx.xxxxxx.xx

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a stylized 'W' followed by a horizontal line that tapers off to the right.

Wolfgang BURTSCHER

Encl.: List of identified documents and 39 documents or annexes