C/2025/4107

23.7.2025

Publication of the communication of an approved standard amendment to a product specification of a geographical indication in accordance with Article 5(4) of Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2025/27 [1]

(C/2025/4107)

COMMUNICATION OF APPROVAL OF A STANDARD AMENDMENT

(Article 24 of Regulation (EU) 2024/1143)

'Eau-de-vie de Cognac / Eau-de-vie des Charentes / Cognac'

EU No: PGI-FR-02043-AM02 – 25.4.2025

1. **Name of product**

'Eau-de-vie de Cognac / Eau-de-vie des Charentes / Cognac'

2. **Geographical indication type**

☐ Protected designation of origin (PDO)

☐ Protected geographical indication (PGI)

☒ Geographical indication (GI)

3. **Sector**

☐ Agricultural products

☐ Wines

☒ Spirit drinks

4. **Country to which the geographical area belongs**

France

5. **National authority communicating the standard amendment**

Institut National de l'Origine et de la Qualité (INAO) [National Institute of Origin and Quality]

6. **Qualification as standard amendment**

Explanation as to why the amendment or amendments fall under the definition of a standard amendment as provided for in Article 24(4) of Regulation (EU) 2024/1143

The amendments made do not include a change of name, do not change the legal name or the category of the spirit drink, do not risk voiding the quality, reputation or other characteristic of the spirit drink and do not entail further restrictions on the marketing of the product.

7. **Description of the approved standard amendment(s)**

1. *Introduction of new varieties*

Description

The producer group has entered in its product specification the three interspecific varieties Coutia, Luminan and Vidal as varieties of interest for adaptation purposes (*Variétés d'Intérêt à des Fins d'Adaptation* – VIFA). The varieties chosen enable wines with a low alcohol content and high acidity to be produced, which makes them suitable varieties for the production of spirit drinks.

[1] Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2025/27 of 30 October 2024 supplementing Regulation (EU) 2024/1143 of the European Parliament and of the Council with rules concerning the registration and the protection of geographical indications, traditional specialities guaranteed and optional quality terms and repealing Delegated Regulation (EU) No 664/2014 (OJ L, 2025/27, 15.1.2025, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg_del/2025/27/oj).

The rules on vine varieties (Part 1(D)(1) – Vine varieties) and on blending (Part 1(D)(10) – Rules on blending and finishing) have also been amended.

The proportion of the varieties Coutia B, Luminan B and Vidal B, taken together or separately, is less than or equal to 5 % of the vine varieties of the holding. Holdings with less than 20 ha may derogate from this rule, up to a maximum of 1 ha of VIFA and 10 % of vine varieties.

The single document has been amended in the section 'Method of production of the spirit drink'.

A summary of the reasons for which the amendment is required

The reason given by the producer group for this request is the need to select vine varieties suited to environmental requirements and climate change, which is having a significant impact on agricultural production systems. In this context, the group has been conducting research programmes for the past two decades, in partnership with the French National Research Institute for Agriculture, Food and the Environment (Institut national de recherche pour l'agriculture, l'alimentation et l'environnement – INRAE) and the French Wine and Vine Institute (Institut Français de la Vigne et du Vin – IFV) for the selection of these varieties.

The varieties chosen enable wines with a low alcohol content and high acidity to be produced. The group has also deemed the aromatic profiles of these varieties to be consistent with the typical characteristics of Cognac.

The product specification needs to be amended in order to incorporate the new varieties and:

— to amend the rules on vine varieties.

The amendment affects the single document.

2. *Agri-environmental provisions*

Description

The environmental provisions (Part 1(D)(2)(g) – Agri-environmental measures) on the weed control of parcels and areas between rows have been amended. The purpose of these amendments is to incorporate the rules on checks to be complied with in order to declare conformity.

Specifically:

— a maximum of 80 cm of chemical weed control on the ridge, where the spacing between rows is less than or equal to 2,5 m;

— chemical weed control of the ridge is permitted on a maximum of one third of the surface area, where the spacing between rows is greater than 2,5 m.

The single document has been amended in the section 'Method of production of the spirit drink'.

A summary of the reasons for which the amendment is required

Following the introduction of agri-environmental provisions in the product specification, the inspection plan was amended and approved in September 2021.

The inspection services have put in place an inspection methodology that lays down cultivation practices in line with these new provisions.

The group wishes to clarify the definition of two target values in its product specification relating to these two agri-environmental provisions in order to make inspections more reliable.

The amendment affects the single document.

3. *Link with origin*

Description

Part 1(E)(2) – Historical factors relating to the link with the area:

— 'In the 16th century' instead of the 15th century;

— 'at the start of the 17th century' instead of the 15th century.

The centuries designating historical events were incorrect.

The single document has been amended in the section on the link in order to correct this mistake.

A summary of the reasons for which the amendment is required

These amendments have been made in order to correct mistakes regarding centuries in the link with the origin.

The amendment affects the single document.

4. *Updating of the maximum alcoholic strength by volume*

Description

Part 1(B)(3) – Specific characteristics compared with other spirit drinks of the same category: the maximum alcoholic strength by volume has changed from 72,4 % to 73,7 %.

The updating of the maximum alcoholic strength by volume to 73,7 % was adopted in June 2022. The reason given by the protection and management body for this request was global warming, which has led to an increase in the alcoholic strength by volume of wines for distillation and, therefore, an increase in the alcoholic strength of the *brouillis* (raw distillate).

A summary of the reasons for which the amendment is required

Following an oversight in the product specification during the previous approval, the product specification needs to be amended in Part 1(B)(3) in order to correct this mistake.

The single document, on the other hand, had been amended correctly and does not need to be amended now.

The amendment does not affect the single document.

5. *Transitional measures*

Description

The transitional measures (Part 1(D)(11) – Transitional measures) involving vine varieties and minimum ageing in the geographical area have been deleted, as they have expired.

This point of the single document has not been amended.

A summary of the reasons for which the amendment is required

Having expired, the transitional measures have been deleted to make the product specification clearer.

The amendment does not affect the single document.

6. *Demarcation of the geographical area*

Description

The demarcation of the geographical area has been updated on the basis of the Official Geographic Code as at 1 January 2024.

This point of the single document has been amended.

A summary of the reasons for which the amendment is required

The geographical area remains unchanged following the update of the Official Geographic Code on 1 January 2024, which replaces the 2020 version.

The amendment affects the single document.

7. *Mechanisms for evaluating innovation*

Description

A mechanism for evaluating innovation has been added to the product specification.

The following sentence has been added to the section of the single document describing the method of production:

'For evaluation purposes, however, the use of distillation equipment that does not comply with the above rules, as laid down in the protocol approved by the national committee at its meeting on 11 September 2024, is permitted, subject to the signing by the INAO, the protection and management body and the authorised operator of an agreement endorsed by the national committee on 11 September 2024 and in line with Directive INAO-DIR-CNAOV-2023-01.'

In connection with this evaluation, the rules on blending have also been clarified in the section of the single document describing the method of production:

'Any operator may acquire spirit drinks with more than 10 % of their volume obtained by means of innovation evaluation mechanisms and carry out blending, subject to the signing by the INAO, the protection and management body and the authorised operator of an agreement referred to in points D(8)(c) and D(1). The proportion of the volumes of spirit drinks obtained by means of the innovation evaluation mechanisms provided for in this product specification must be less than or equal to 10 % by volume in the blending of batches of spirit drinks used when marketed to consumers and when producing composite products.'

A summary of the reasons for which the amendment is required

The mechanisms for evaluating the heating of wines and *brouillis* are part of the objective of the Cognac controlled designation of origin to reduce energy consumption and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. For various reasons – such as single-batch distillation, limited load capacity of the stills used, naked flames, or the use of fossil fuels – distillation in the Cognac region generates significant GHG emissions. Distillation accounts for 21 % of the CO_2eq emissions of the Cognac industry, 83 % of which is linked to energy consumption. The agreement limits the evaluation to three years.

The single document has been amended in the section describing the method of production.

The amendment affects the single document.

SINGLE DOCUMENT

1. **Name(s)**

'Eau-de-vie de Cognac / Eau-de-vie des Charentes / Cognac'

2. **Applicant country(ies)**

France

3. **Geographical indication type**

Protected geographical indication (PGI)

4. **Category or categories of the spirit drink**

4. Wine spirit

4.1. *Combined Nomenclature code*

— 22 – BEVERAGES, SPIRITS AND VINEGAR

2208 – Undenatured ethyl alcohol of an alcoholic strength by volume of less than 80 % vol; spirits, liqueurs and other spirituous beverages

5. **Description of the spirit drink**

1. Physical and chemical characteristics: When placed on the market for the consumer, the wine spirits have a minimum alcoholic strength by volume of 40 %, a minimum content of volatile substances of 200 grams per hectolitre of pure alcohol, and a maximum methanol content of less than 100 grams per hectolitre of pure alcohol. Their colour corresponds to a minimum absorbance at 420 nm of 0,1 for a 10 mm optical path. 2. Organoleptic characteristics: 'Cognac' wine spirits have a unique balance and aromatic typicity. Their sensory profile, characterised by complexity and fineness, develops with ageing. The youngest wine spirits have floral and fruity notes, such as vine or acacia flowers, grapes, pears or certain exotic fruits. In contact with oak wood, they acquire characteristic notes, including vanilla, coconut or roasted overtones. Ageing also means that their aromatic profile is enriched and increasingly complex, including notes of candied fruit, spices, wood, tobacco or dried fruit. These notes combine to form a complex and specific aromatic profile, described in the literature as *rancio Charentais* (Flanzy, 1998). This aromatic development is accompanied by changes in flavour, resulting in greater smoothness on the palate, the development of a characteristic roundness and volume, and a significantly longer aftertaste. There are certain nuances between the various production areas (*crus*), which formed the basis for the geographical demarcation established by Coquand at the end of the 19th century: – 'Grande Champagne' produces wine spirits of great finesse with considerable distinction and length, and a predominately floral bouquet. Matured slowly, these wine spirits need lengthy ageing in oak barrels to reach full maturity. – The 'Petite Champagne' wine spirits have essentially the same characteristics as 'Grande Champagne', but reach their optimum quality after a shorter maturation. – 'Cognac' sold under the additional geographical name 'Fine Champagne' has organoleptic characteristics resulting from the blending of 'Grande Champagne' (at least 50 %) and 'Petite Champagne' wine spirits. – The 'Borderies' vineyards produce rounded, aromatic and smooth wine spirits with a scent of violet flower. They are said to reach their optimum quality after a shorter maturation period than the 'Champagne' wine spirits. – 'Fins Bois' forms the largest vineyard region, producing rounded, supple wine spirits that age quite quickly, with a fruity bouquet reminiscent of pressed grapes. – The 'Bois' ('Bons Bois', 'Bois ordinaires' and 'Bois à terroirs') produce wine spirits that have fruity aromas and age quickly. The colour of the wine spirits also develops with ageing. From pale yellow, the colour deepens gradually to take on golden-yellow hues, or even amber and mahogany for the oldest wine spirits.

'Esprit de Cognac' has an alcoholic strength by volume of between 80 % and 85 %.

6. **Concise definition of the geographical area**

To qualify for the controlled designation of origin 'Cognac', 'Eau-de-vie de Cognac' or 'Eau-de-vie des Charentes', all stages of production must take place in the geographical area initially demarcated in the amended Decree of 1 May 1909, which covers the territory of the following municipalities, on the basis of the Official Geographic Code as at 1 January 2024:

Department of Charente:

Entire municipalities:

Agris, Aigre, Ambérac, Anais, Angeac-Champagne, Angeac-Charente, Angeduc, Angoulême, Ars, Asnières-sur-Nouère, Aubeterre-sur-Dronne, Aunac-sur-Charente, Aussac-Vadalle, Baignes-Sainte-Radegonde, Balzac, Barbezières, Barbezieux-Saint-Hilaire, Bardenac, Barret, Bassac, Bazac, Bécheresse, Bellevigne, Bellon, Berneuil, Bessac, Bessé, Birac, Blanzaguet-Saint-Cybard, Boisbreteau, Boisné-La Tude, Bonnes, Bonneuil, Bors (Canton of Tude-et-Lavalette), Bors (Canton of Charente-Sud), Bouëx, Bourg-Charente, Bouteville, Boutiers-Saint-Trojan, Brettes, Bréville, Brie, Brie-sous-Barbezieux, Brie-sous-Chalais, Brossac, Bunzac, Cellettes, Chadurie, Chalais, Challignac, Champagne-Vigny, Champmillon, Champniers, Chantillac, La Chapelle, Charmé, Charras, Chassors, Châteaubernard, Châteauneuf-sur-Charente, Châtignac, Chazelles, Chenon, Chillac, Claix, Cognac, Combiers, Condéon, Coteaux-du-Blanzacais, Coulgens, Coulonges, Courbillac, Courcôme, Courgeac, Courlac, La Couronne, Criteuil-la-Magdeleine, Curac, Deviat, Dignac, Dirac, Douzat, Ébréon, Échallat, Édon, Les Essards, Étriac, Feuillade, Fléac, Fleurac, Fontenille, Fouquebrune, Fouqueure, Foussignac, Garat, Gardes-le-Pontaroux, Genac-Bignac, Gensac-la-Pallue, Genté, Gimeux, Gond-Pontouvre, Les Gours, Grassac, Graves-Saint-Amant, Guimps, Guizengeard, Gurat, Hiersac, Houlette, L'Isle-d'Espagnac, Jarnac, Jauldes, Javrezac, Juignac, Juillac-le-Coq, Juillé, Julienne, Lachaise, Ladiville, Lagarde-sur-le-Né, Laprade, Lichères, Ligné, Lignières-Ambleville, Linars, Longré, Lonnes, Louzac-Saint-André, Lupsault, Luxé, Magnac-Lavalette-Villars, Magnac-sur-Touvre, Maine-de-Boixe, Mainxe-Gondeville, Mainzac, Mansle-les-Fontaines, Marcillac-Lanville, Mareuil, Marsac, Marthon, Médillac, Mérignac, Merpins, Mesnac, Les Métairies, Mons, Montboyer, Montignac-Charente, Montignac-le-Coq, Montmérac, Montmoreau, Mornac, Mosnac-Saint-Simeux, Moulidars, Mouthiers-sur-Boëme, Mouton, Moutonneau, Nabinaud, Nanclars, Nercillac, Nersac, Nonac, Oradour, Oriolles, Orival, Palluaud, Passirac, Pérignac, Pillac, Plassac-Rouffiac, Poullignac, Poursac, Pranzac, Puymoyen, Puyréaux, Raix,

Ranville-Breuillaud, Reignac, Réparsac, Rioux-Martin, Rivières, La Rochette, Ronsenac, Rouffiac, Rougnac, Rouillac, Roullet-Saint-Estèphe, Ruelle-sur-Touvre, Saint-Amant-de-Boixe, Saint-Amant-de-Nouère, Saint-Aulais-la-Chapelle, Saint-Avit, Saint-Bonnet, Saint-Brice, Saint-Ciers-sur-Bonnieure, Saint-Cybardeaux, Saint-Félix, Saint-Fort-sur-le-Né, Saint-Fraigne, Saint-Front, Saint-Genis-d'Hiersac, Saint-Germain-de-Montbron, Saint-Groux, Saint-Laurent-de-Cognac, Saint-Laurent-des-Combes, Saint-Martial, Saint-Médard, Saint-Même-les-Carrières, Saint-Michel, Saint-Palais-du-Né, Saint-Preuil, Saint-Quentin-de-Chalais, Saint-Romain, Saint-Saturnin, Sainte-Sévère, Saint-Séverin, Saint-Simon, Sainte-Souline, Saint-Vallier, Saint-Yrieix-sur-Charente, Salles-d'Angles, Salles-de-Barbezieux, Salles-de-Villefagnan, Salles-Lavalette, Sauvignac, Segonzac, Sers, Sigogne, Sireuil, Souffrignac, Souvigné, Soyaux, Le Tâtre, Torsac, Tourriers, Touvérac, Touvre, Triac-Lautrait, Trois-Palis, Tusson, Val-d'Auge, Val-de-Bonnieure, Val-de-Cognac, Val des Vignes, Valence, Vars, Vaux-Lavalette, Vaux-Rouillac, Verdille, Verrières, Verteuil-sur-Charente, Vervant, Vibrac, Vignolles, Villebois-Lavalette, Villefagnan, Villejoubert, Villognon, Vindelle, Vœuil-et-Giget, Vouharte, Voulgézac, Vouzan, Xambes, Yviers.

Municipalities included in part only:

Moulins-sur-Tardoire (the part corresponding to the territory of the delegated municipality of Rancogne as at 1 January 2019), La Rochefoucauld-en-Angoumois (the part corresponding to the territory of the delegated municipality of Saint-Projet-Saint-Constant as at 1 January 2019).

Department of Charente-Maritime, municipalities of:

Agudelle, Aigrefeuille-d'Aunis, Ile d'Aix, Allas-Bocage, Allas-Champagne, Anais, Angliers, Angoulins, Annepont, Annezay, Antezant-la-Chapelle, Arces, Archiac, Archingeay, Ardillières, Ars-en-Ré, Arthenac, Arvert, Asnières-la-Giraud, Aujac, Aulnay, Aumagne, Authon-Ébéon, Avy, Aytré, Bagnizeau, Balanzac, Ballans, Ballon, La Barde, Barzan, Bazauges, Beaugeay, Beauvais-sur-Matha, Bedenac, Belluire, Benon, Bercloux, Bernay-Saint-Martin, Berneuil, Beurlay, Bignay, Biron, Blanzac-lès-Matha, Blanzay-sur-Boutonne, Bois, Le Bois-Plage-en-Ré, Boisredon, Bords, Boresse-et-Martron, Boscamnant, Bougneau, Bouhet, Bourcefranc-le-Chapus, Bourgneuf, Boutenac-Touvent, Bran, La Brée-les-Bains, Bresdon, Breuil-la-Réorte, Breuillet, Breuil-Magné, Brie-sous-Archiac, Brie-sous-Matha, Brie-sous-Mortagne, Brives-sur-Charente, Brizambourg, La Brousse, Burie, Bussac-sur-Charente, Bussac-Forêt, Cabariot, Celles, Cercoux, Chadenac, Chaillevette, Chambon, Chamouillac, Champagnac, Champagne, Champagnolles, Champdolent, Chaniers, Chantemerle-sur-la-Soie, La Chapelle-des-Pots, Chartuzac, Le Château-d'Oléron, Châtelaillon-Plage, Chatenet, Chaunac, Le Chay, Chenac-Saint-Seurin-d'Uzet, Chepniers, Chérac, Cherbonnières, Chermignac, Chevanceaux, Chives, Cierzac, Ciré-d'Aunis, Clam, Clavette, Clérac, Clion, La Clisse, La Clotte, Coivert, Colombiers, Consac, Contré, Corignac, Corme-Écluse, Corme-Royal, La Couarde-sur-Mer, Coulonges, Courant, Courcelles, Courcerac, Courçon, Courcoury, Courpignac, Coux, Cozes, Cramchaban, Cravans, Crazannes, Cressé, Croix-Chapeau, La Croix-Comtesse, Dampierre-sur-Boutonne, La Devise, Dœuil-sur-le-Mignon, Dolus-d'Oléron, Dompierre-sur-Charente, Dompierre-sur-Mer, Le Douhet, Échebrune, Échillais, Écoyeux, Écurat, Les Éduts, Les Églises-d'Argenteuil, L'Éguille, Épargnes, Esnandes, Les Essards, Étaules, Expiremont, Fenioux, Ferrières, Fléac-sur-Seugne, Floirac, La Flotte, Fontaine-Chalendray, Fontaines-d'Ozillac, Fontcouverte, Fontenet, Forges, Le Fouilloux, Fouras, Geay, Gémozac, La Genétouze, Genouillé, Germignac, Gibourne, Le Gicq, Givrezac, Les Gonds, Gourvillette, Le Grand-Village-Plage, Grandjean, La Grève-sur-Mignon, Grézac, La Gripperie-Saint-Symphorien, Le Gua, Le Gué-d'Alleré, Guitinières, Haimps, L'Houmeau, La Jard, Jarnac-Champagne, La Jarne, La Jarrie, La Jarrie-Audouin, Jazennes, Jonzac, Juicq, Jussas, Lagord, La Laigne, Landes, Landrais, Léoville, Loire-les-Marais, Loiré-sur-Nie, Loix, Longèves, Lonzac, Lorignac, Loulay, Louzignac, Lozay, Luchat, Lussac, Lussant, Macqueville, Marennes-Hiers-Brouage, Marignac, Marsais, Marsilly, Massac, Matha, Les Mathes, Mazeray, Mazerolles, Médis, Mérignac, Meschers-sur-Gironde, Messac, Meursac, Meux, Migré, Migron, Mirambeau, Moëze, Mons, Montendre, Montguyon, Montils, Montlieu-la-Garde, Montpellier-de-Médillan, Montroy, Moragne, Mornac-sur-Seudre, Mortagne-sur-Gironde, Mortiers, Mosnac, Le Mung, Muron, Nachamps, Nancras, Nantillé, Néré, Neuillac, Neulles, Neuvicq, Neuvicq-le-Château, Nieul-lès-Saintes, Nieul-le-Virouil, Nieul-sur-Mer, Nieulle-sur-Seudre, Les Nouillers, Nuaillé-d'Aunis, Nuaillé-sur-Boutonne, Orignolles, Ozillac, Paillé, Pérignac, Périgny, Pessines, Le Pin, Essouvert, Pisany, Plassac, Plassay, Polignac, Pommiers-Moulons, Pons, Pont-l'Abbé-d'Arnoult, Port-d'Envaux, Port-des-Barques, Les Portes-en-Ré, Pouillac, Poursay-Garnaud, Préguillac, Prignac, Puilboreau, Puy-du-Lac, Puyravault, Puyrolland, Réaux sur Trèfle, Rétaud, Rivedoux-Plage, Rioux, Rochefort, La Rochelle, Romazières, Romegoux, Rouffiac, Rouffignac, Royan, Sablonceaux, Saint-Agnant, Saint-Aigulin, Saint-André-de-Lidon, Saint-Augustin, Saint-Bonnet-sur-Gironde, Saint-Bris-des-Bois, Saint-Césaire, Saint-Christophe, Saint-Ciers-Champagne, Saint-Ciers-du-Taillon, Saint-Clément-des-Baleines, Sainte-Colombe, Saint-Coutant-le-Grand, Saint-Crépin, Saint-Cyr-du-Doret, Saint-Denis-d'Oléron, Saint-Dizant-du-Bois, Saint-Dizant-du-Gua, Saint-Eugène, Saint-Félix, Saint-Fort-sur-Gironde, Saint-Froult, Sainte-Gemme, Saint-Genis-de-Saintonge, Saint-Georges-Antignac, Saint-Georges-de-Didonne, Saint-Georges-de-Longuepierre, Saint-Georges-des-Agoûts, Saint-Georges-des-Coteaux, Saint-Georges-d'Oléron, Saint-Georges-du-Bois, Saint-Germain-de-Lusignan, Saint-Germain-de-Vibrac,

Saint-Germain-du-Seudre, Saint-Grégoire-d'Ardennes, Saint-Hilaire-de-Villefranche, Saint-Hilaire-du-Bois, Saint-Hippolyte, Saint-Jean-d'Angély, Saint-Jean-d'Angle, Saint-Jean-de-Liversay, Saint-Julien-de-l'Escap, Saint-Just-Luzac, Saint-Laurent-de-la-Prée, Saint-Léger, Sainte-Lheurine, Saint-Loup, Saint-Maigrin, Saint-Mandé-sur-Brédoire, Saint-Mard, Sainte-Marie-de-Ré, Saint-Martial, Saint-Martial-de-Mirambeau, Saint-Martial-de-Vitaterne, Saint-Martial-sur-Né, Saint-Martin-d'Ary, Saint-Martin-de-Coux, Saint-Martin-de-Juillers, Saint-Martin-de-Ré, Saint-Médard, Saint-Médard-d'Aunis, Sainte-Même, Saint-Nazaire-sur-Charente, Saint-Ouen-d'Aunis, Saint-Ouen-la-Thène, Saint-Palais-de-Négrignac, Saint-Palais-de-Phiolin, Saint-Palais-sur-Mer, Saint-Pardoult, Saint-Pierre-La-Noue, Saint-Pierre-d'Amilly, Saint-Pierre-de-Juillers, Saint-Pierre-de-l'Isle, Saint-Pierre-d'Oléron, Saint-Pierre-du-Palais, Saint-Porchaire, Saint-Quantin-de-Rançanne, Sainte-Radegonde, Sainte-Ramée, Saint-Rogatien, Saint-Romain-de-Benet, Saint-Saturnin-du-Bois, Saint-Sauvant, Saint-Sauveur-d'Aunis, Saint-Savinien, Saint-Seurin-de-Palenne, Saint-Sever-de-Saintonge, Saint-Séverin-sur-Boutonne, Saint-Sigismond-de-Clermont, Saint-Simon-de-Bordes, Saint-Simon-de-Pellouaille, Saint-Sorlin-de-Conac, Saint-Sornin, Sainte-Soulle, Saint-Sulpice-d'Arnoult, Saint-Sulpice-de-Royan, Saint-Thomas-de-Conac, Saint-Trojan-les-Bains, Saint-Vaize, Saint-Vivien, Saint-Xandre, Saintes, Saleignes, Salignac-de-Mirambeau, Salignac-sur-Charente, Salles-sur-Mer, Saujon, Seigné, Semillac, Semoussac, Semussac, Le Seure, Siecq, Sonnac, Soubise, Soubran, Soulignonne, Souméras, Sousmoulins, Surgères, Taillant, Taillebourg, Talmont-sur-Gironde, Tanzac, Ternant, Tesson, Thaims, Thairé, Thénac, Thézac, Thors, Le Thou, Tonnay-Boutonne, Tonnay-Charente, Torxé, Les Touches-de-Périgny, La Tremblade, Trizay, Tugéras-Saint-Maurice, La Vallée, Vanzac, Varaize, Varzay, Vaux-sur-Mer, Vénérand, Vergeroux, Vergné, La Vergne, Vérines, Vervant, Vibrac, Villars-en-Pons, Villars-les-Bois, La Villedieu, Villedoux, Villemorin, Villeneuve-la-Comtesse, Villexavier, Villiers-Couture, Vinax, Virollet, Virson, Voissay, Vouhé, Yves.

Department of Dordogne, municipalities of:

Parcoul-Chenaud, La Roche-Chalais, Saint Aulaye-Puymangou.

Department of Deux-Sèvres, municipalities of:

Beauvoir-sur-Niort, Le Bourdet, La Foye-Monjault, Granzay-Gript, Mauzé-sur-le-Mignon, Plaine-d'Argenson, Prin-Deyrançon, La Rochénard, Val-du-Mignon, Le Vert.

Maps of the geographical area can be consulted on the website of the National Institute of Origin and Quality (Institut national de l'origine et de la qualité – INAO).

7. **Method of production of the spirit drink**

The wines intended for the production of the wine spirits are obtained from the following grape varieties:

— Colombard B, Folle Blanche B, Montils B, Sémillon B, Ugni Blanc B;

— Folignan B, accounting for a maximum of 10 % of the vine varieties used.

— Coutia B, Luminan B, Vidal B, as varieties of interest for adaptation purposes (*Variétés d'Intérêt à des Fins d'Adaptation* – VIFA), subject to the signing of an agreement by the INAO, the protection and management body and the authorised operator in line with the framework agreement for wine spirits obtained by second distillation (*repasse*) approved by the competent national committee on 30 June 2023.

The proportion of the varieties Coutia B, Luminan B and Vidal B, taken together or separately, must be less than or equal to 5 % of the vine varieties of the holding.

Holdings with less than 20 ha may derogate from this rule, up to a maximum of 1 ha of VIFA and 10 % of vine varieties.

The conformity of the vine varieties is assessed across all the parcels of a holding intended for the production of 'Eaux-de-vie de Cognac'.

a) Planting density

The minimum planting density of the vines is 2 200 plants per hectare.

b) Spacing

The maximum spacing between the vine rows is 3.50 m.

c) Pruning

Pruning must be performed each year. All pruning methods are allowed.

d) Number of buds per hectare

The number of buds is limited to 80 000 per hectare.

e) First production of young vines

Spirits made from wine from young vines may be granted the 'Cognac' controlled designation of origin only from the second year after planting, which must take place before 31 July.

f) Dead or missing vines

— For vineyards with a density not exceeding 2 500 vines per hectare at the time of planting or following transformation of the parcel, the percentage of dead or missing vines referred to in Article D.645-4 of the Rural and Maritime Fishing Code is set at 20 %.

— For vineyards with a density exceeding 2 500 vines per hectare but not exceeding 2 900 vines per hectare at the time of planting or following transformation, the percentage of dead or missing vines referred to in Article D.645-4 of the Rural and Maritime Fishing Code is set at 25 %.

— For vineyards with a density exceeding 2 900 vines per hectare at the time of planting or following transformation, the percentage of dead or missing vines referred to in Article D.645-4 of the Rural and Maritime Fishing Code is set at 35 %.

g) Agri-environmental measures

Full chemical weed control on parcels is prohibited.

Chemical weed control is limited to the ridge, representing:

— for vines with a spacing greater than 2,5 m, a maximum of one third of the spacing between the rows;

— for vines with a spacing less than or equal to 2,5 m, a maximum of 80 cm.

Between the rows, naturally occurring and/or planted vegetation is managed by mechanical or physical means.

Chemical weed control is prohibited on headlands.

The maximum authorised annual yield corresponds to the maximum quantity of grapes or the equivalent in volume of wine or must harvested per hectare, expressed in hectolitres of wine per hectare at a reference alcoholic strength by volume of 10 %. It must not exceed an upper yield limit of 160 hectolitres of wine per hectare at a reference alcoholic strength by volume of 10 %.

The use of centrifugal vane pumps to transfer the grapes is prohibited.

The use of a press with an Archimedean screw, known as a continuous press, is prohibited.

All enrichment methods are prohibited.

The use of sulphur dioxide is prohibited during the fermentation periods of vinification.

At the time of distillation, the wines must have a minimum alcoholic strength by volume of 7 % and a maximum alcoholic strength by volume of 12 %. Their volatile acid content must not exceed 12,25 milliequivalents per litre.

a) Distillation period

Only wine spirits obtained by distilling wines from the current wine year may use the 'Cognac' controlled designation of origin.

Distillation must be completed by 31 March of the year following the harvest.

b) The principle of distillation

Distillation is carried out according to the principle of single batch distillation with second distillation, known as *repasse* or double distillation. This method consists of a sequence of two distillation stages:

— the first distillation (*première chauffe*) involves the distillation of the wine, enabling the *brouillis* (raw distillate) to be obtained;

— the second distillation (*repasse* or *bonne chauffe*) involves the distillation of the *brouillis*, enabling the 'Cognac' wine spirit to be obtained after removing the products from the beginning and end of distillation (the heads and tails);

— during the first and second distillations, the heads and tails from previous distillations that were not retained as 'Cognac' wine spirit may be added to the wine or *brouillis*.

c) Description of the distillation equipment

An *alambic charentais* (Charente pot still) consists of a boiler heated over a naked flame, a still head, a swan's neck with or without a pre-heater, and a cooling coil.

The boiler, still head, swan's neck, cooling coil and open alcoholmeter holder must be made of copper.

For evaluation purposes, however, the use of distillation equipment that does not comply with the above rules, as laid down in the protocol approved by the national committee at its meeting on 11 September 2024, is permitted, subject to the signing by the INAO, the protection and management body and the authorised operator of an agreement endorsed by the national committee on 11 September 2024 and in line with Directive INAO-DIR-CNAOV-2023-01.

The total capacity of the boiler must not exceed 30 hectolitres (with a tolerance of 5 %), and the loading capacity is limited to 25 hectolitres (with a tolerance of 5 %) per distillation.

However, boilers with a higher capacity than that set out in the previous paragraph may also be used, provided that they are used only for the first distillation to obtain the *brouillis*, that the total capacity of the boiler does not exceed 140 hectolitres (with a tolerance of 5 %), and that the volume of wine distilled is limited to 120 hectolitres (with a tolerance of 5 %) per distillation.

d) Alcoholic strength of the wine spirit

After the double distillation, the alcoholic strength by volume of the wine spirit must not exceed 73,7 % at 20 °C in the container where the day's production of wine spirit is kept.

e) Making *Esprit de Cognac*

This product is produced after an additional distillation of the second distillation in a still as described above. Its alcoholic strength by volume must be between 80 % and 85 %.

f) Distillation method when there is a change of *cru*

The word *cru* refers to an additional geographical name whose geographical area is defined in the section on additional geographical indications.

When distillation involves wines from different *crus*, the heads and tails of the second distillation may be incorporated into the *brouillis* or into wines from another *cru* under the following conditions only:

— before the change, the final second distillation of the *cru* currently being distilled must be carried out using a maximum of 33 % of the distillery's load capacity, if the distillery has at least three stills;

— the heads and tails of the second distillation incorporated must not exceed 8 % of the volume of the load of the still being used.

The blending of wine spirits of different ages and with different profiles is an inherent practice in the production of 'Cognac'. It allows a product with the exact, harmonious organoleptic characteristics sought to be obtained consistently.

Any operator may acquire spirit drinks with more than 10 % of their volume obtained by means of innovation evaluation mechanisms and carry out blending, subject to the signing by the INAO, the protection and management body and the authorised operator of an agreement referred to in points D(8)(c) and D(1). The proportion of the volumes of spirit drinks obtained by means of the innovation evaluation mechanisms provided for in this product specification must be less than or equal to 10 % by volume in the blending of batches of spirit drinks used when marketed to consumers and when producing composite products.

Only the following methods are permitted:

— adapting the colour using E150a caramel (plain caramel);

— sweetening using the products set out in point 3(a) of Annex 1 to Regulation (EC) No 110/2008 in order to round off the final taste;

— the addition of an infusion of oak chips in warm water.

Their effect on the obscuration of the wine spirit must not exceed 4 % by volume. Obscuration, expressed as % by volume, is obtained by calculating the difference between the actual alcoholic strength by volume and the gross alcoholic strength by volume.

The addition of an infusion of wood chips constitutes a traditional method: the type of wood used is in keeping with that of the containers listed in the specification and, where applicable, the infusion is stabilised by adding a wine spirit corresponding to the target wine spirit.

'Cognac' wine spirits are aged without interruption in oak containers only.

To be made available for direct human consumption, these wine spirits must be aged for at least two years. The first two years of ageing must take place in the defined geographical area.

8. **Specific rules concerning packaging**

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9. **Specific labelling rules**

9.1. *General rules*

The name 'Cognac' may be used without the words *appellation contrôlée* [controlled designation] as long as it is not associated with any additional geographical name.

9.2. *Terms relating to ageing*

The minimum age of the 'Cognac' wine spirits dispatched must correspond to:

— *Compte 2* for the terms '3 Etoiles', 'Sélection', 'VS', 'De Luxe', 'Very Special' and 'Millésime';

— *Compte 3* for the terms 'supérieur', 'Cuvée Supérieure' and 'Qualité Supérieure';

— *Compte 4* for the terms 'V.S.O.P.', 'Réserve', 'Vieux', 'Rare' and 'Royal';

— *Compte 5* for the terms 'Vieille Réserve', 'Réserve Rare' and 'Réserve Royale';

— *Compte 6* for the terms 'Napoléon', 'Très Vieille Réserve', 'Très Vieux', 'Héritage', 'Très Rare', 'Excellence' and 'Suprême';

— *Compte 10* for the terms 'XO', 'Hors d'âge', 'Extra', 'Ancestral', 'Ancêtre', 'Or', 'Gold', 'Impérial' 'Extra Old', 'XXO' and 'Extra Extra Old'.

— The terms 'XXO' and 'Extra Extra Old' are specific terms given to wine spirits that have been aged for at least 14 years.

With the exception of the above compound ageing terms, which correspond to a particular *compte* (age count), the use of several terms designating the same age count on the same labelling does not alter the age count used.

Where several ageing terms designating different age counts are used on the same labelling, the oldest age count takes precedence.

The use of ageing terms on the labelling and the way in which they are presented must not create confusion in the mind of the buyer or consumer as to the age and essential qualities of the 'Cognac'.

10. **Description of the link between the spirit drink and its geographical origin, including, where appropriate, the specific elements of the product description or production method justifying the link**

'Cognac' wine spirits have a unique balance and aromatic typicity reflecting their compliance with all elements of the specification for the designation in terms of geographical origin, grape varieties, viticultural practices, winemaking techniques, distillation and ageing.

1. *Description of the natural and human factors relevant to the link with the area*

a) Climate

The demarcated area for 'Cognac' – which covers almost all of the Charente-Maritime department, much of the Charente department and several municipalities of the Dordogne and Deux-Sèvres departments – lies to the north of the Aquitaine Basin, bordering the Atlantic Ocean. To the west, it is bordered by the Gironde Estuary and the islands of Ré and Oléron, and to the east, towards Angoulême, by the first foothills of the Massif Central. The Charente river runs through the region, with minor tributaries including the Né, Antenne and Seugne rivers.

The temperate oceanic climate is fairly homogeneous, except for the coastal regions, which are sunnier and have a lower range of temperatures. Due to the proximity of the ocean, rain can fall at any time of year, although it is heavier in winter. Drought conditions are therefore rare, ensuring a regular water supply to the vines. The average annual temperature is approximately 13 °C, with fairly mild winters. Temperatures are sufficiently warm to ensure the proper ripening of the grapes, but not so hot that they burn.

b) The vineyards

Henri Coquand (1811-1881), a geology professor, studied the geology of the region in the mid-19th century and, with the help of a wine taster, classified the various sub-regions on the basis of the quality of wine spirit their soils could produce.

Around 1860, their work led to the demarcation of various *crus* and formed the basis for the decree of 13 January 1938 demarcating these *crus*. The additional geographical names used for the 'Cognac' designation still bear their historical name: 'Grande Champagne', 'Petite Champagne', 'Fine Champagne', 'Borderies', 'Fins bois' and 'Bons Bois', as well as 'Bois ordinaires' and 'Bois à terroir'.

It should be noted that the additional geographical name 'Fine Champagne' does not correspond to any territory as such.

Its use is confined to a blend of wine spirits obtained exclusively from the two additional geographical names 'Grande Champagne' and 'Petite Champagne', with at least 50 % of the wine spirit obtained from 'Grande Champagne'.

According to studies carried out at that time, the dominant soil characteristics for these names are as follows:

— 'Grande Champagne' and 'Petite Champagne': fairly shallow clay-limestone soils on soft, chalky limestone from the Cretaceous period;

— 'Borderies': siliceous-clay soils, with flint resulting from limestone decarbonation;

— 'Fins Bois': largely consisting of *groies* (shallow, red, very stony clay-limestone soils, from hard Jurassic limestone), with very clayey soils elsewhere;

— The 'Bois' ('Bons Bois', 'Bois ordinaires' and 'Bois à terroirs'): sandy soils in coastal areas, in some of the valleys and in the entire southern part of the vineyard area. The sands were brought here by erosion from the Massif Central.

Vineyards dedicated to the production of 'Cognac' now cover some 75 000 hectares, or 95 % of the area's vineyards (and some 9 % of the agricultural area of the demarcated region). Ugni Blanc is the most widely planted grape variety; today, it accounts for almost 98 % of vines planted in Cognac.

c) The economy of Cognac

The region's economy has historically been linked to the prosperity brought by the 'Cognac' trade, around which many related professions and industries have developed, forming a professional community entirely focused on the production and sale of 'Cognac'.

The companies involved in the production of 'Cognac' (some 5 500 winegrowers, 110 professional distillers and 300 merchants) form a strong professional community of around 12 000 people, including coopers, boilermakers, glassmaking, cardboard, printing and corking companies, transport firms, wine laboratories, and manufacturers of agricultural equipment.

2. *Historical factors relating to the link with the area*

Archaeological research carried out in Charentes has provided evidence that the first vineyard plantations appeared as far back as the end of the first century AD. Furthermore, excavations have shown that the region was very well catered for in terms of farm buildings, particularly for winemaking, confirming that wine was being produced in the region as early as the High Roman Empire.

In the Middle Ages, a mentality well suited to international trade emerged in the region, thanks to the Charente river. The town of Cognac was already associated with the wine trade, in addition to the activities of its salt warehouse, which had been well known since the 11th century. Shipped by Dutch vessels which had come to collect salt from the Atlantic coast, wines from the Poitou vineyards became popular in the countries bordering the North Sea.

In the 16th century, the Dutch decided to distil the region's wines so that they would keep better. By the Renaissance, trade was booming. Dutch vessels were coming to Cognac and the ports of the Charente in search of the renowned wines of the 'Champagne' and 'Borderies' *crus*.

These low-alcohol wines suffered, however, from the long voyage by sea. Knowledge of the art of distillation prompted the Dutch to distil these wines in their own country, so that they would keep better. They called it *brandwijn* (literally 'burnt wine'), which would go on to be called 'brandy', or wine spirit.

Double distillation appeared at the start of the 17th century, enabling the product to be transported as a stable spirit that was much more concentrated than wine. Brought to the Charente by the Dutch, the first stills were gradually modified; the people of the Charente would master and improve on the technique with the double distillation process.

This period saw the birth of numerous trading houses, which, in the mid-19th century, began shipping the wine spirit in bottles rather than barrels.

This new form of trade would lead in turn to the birth of associated industries: glassmaking (which would develop local know-how for the mechanisation of bottle-making processes), crate and cork production, and printing.

Phylloxera vastatrix – a hemipterous insect that attacked vines by sucking the sap from their roots – appeared in the Charente around 1875. It would destroy most of the vineyards, which would never recover: by 1893 there were just 40 600 hectares left, compared with 280 000 before phylloxera struck. As elsewhere in Europe, the vineyards of the Charente were replanted thanks to grafting on American rootstocks. This episode would lead to the creation, in 1888, of a viticulture committee, which became a viticultural station in 1892, an interprofessional research facility dedicated to 'Cognac'.

The facility would devote considerable effort to varietal research. Its work would result in Ugni Blanc becoming the most commonly planted variety by the mid-20th century. Ugni Blanc had proved to be more resistant than the traditional varieties used before the phylloxera crisis (Colombard, Folle Blanche, etc.), which had been weakened by grafting.

Ugni Blanc was also favoured for its productivity (yields are between 120 and 130 hectolitres in volume per hectare), high acidity and low sugar content, which produces a low-alcohol wine. Originally from Italy, where it is known as Trebbiano Toscano, Ugni Blanc does not grow any further north than the Cognac region.

3. *Historical factors relating to the reputation of the product*

From the end of the 17th century, and especially from the next century onwards, the market became organised and, to meet demand, trading businesses were created. Trading posts (known as *comptoirs*) – including some from English-speaking countries – were set up in the main towns of the region: Martell in 1715, Rémy Martin in 1724, Delamain in 1759, Hennessy in 1765, Godet in 1782, Hine in 1791 and Otard in 1795.

At the instigation of Napoleon III, the signing of a trade agreement between France and England on 23 January 1860 led to a surge in sales of 'Cognac', which peaked in 1879. Trading firms created at this time included Bisquit in 1819, Courvoisier in 1843, Royer in 1853, Meukow in 1862, and Camus and Hardy in 1863.

In the first half of the 20th century, legislation on 'Cognac' was introduced to enshrine local, fair and consistent customs:

— 1909: demarcation of the geographical area of production;

— 1936: recognition of 'Cognac' as a controlled designation of origin;

— 1938: demarcation of regional designations (*crus* or geographical names).

During the Second World War, a bureau to oversee the distribution of wines and wine spirits was created to safeguard 'Cognac' stocks. It would be replaced in 1946, following the Liberation of France, by the Bureau National Interprofessionnel du Cognac (BNIC), to which the viticultural station was attached in 1948. 'Cognac' winegrowers and merchants agreed on a definition of the BNIC's overall mission, which is to develop 'Cognac' and represent and defend the collective interests of professionals. The BNIC's role includes publicising, defending and promoting the 'Cognac' designation of origin and fostering relations between merchants and winegrowers. It is also vested with a public-service mission. As such, it monitors the ageing, verifies the age and monitors the quality downstream of 'Cognac' wine spirits, as well as issuing the necessary export certificates.

Historically an export product, today over 95 % of 'Cognac' is consumed outside France, in almost 160 countries. From the Far East to the Americas and Europe, 'Cognac' is synonymous among connoisseurs with a high-quality wine spirit and a symbol of the French way of life.

4. *Causal link between the geographical area and the quality or characteristics of the product*

The region's grape varieties, in particular Ugni Blanc, are highly productive and late-ripening, which has many advantages for the production of distillation wines that are low-alcohol and acidic, qualities that are essential for the end quality of 'Cognac'.

The wines used to produce 'Cognac' have a genuine specificity, which has been described consistently in scientific and technical literature for over a century.

A particular and consistent feature of the production of 'Cognac' is the pursuit of low-alcohol, acidic wines (Ravaz (1900), Lafon et al (1964), Lurton et al (2011)).

The acidity preserves the wine naturally over the winter months until it is distilled, while the low alcoholic strength makes it possible to achieve the desired concentration of the wines' aromas.

Vineyards with low yields tend to produce wines with a higher alcoholic strength by volume, with lower levels of acidity and nitrogen in the grapes. Higher yields tend to have the opposite effect: lower alcohol strength and higher acidity.

Excessive yields, on the other hand, exacerbate other parameters, such as the proportion of malic acid, less fully developed aromas, their dilution, and the frequency of Botrytis attacks, which are detrimental to the quality of the wine spirits.

This set of parameters has therefore led to the definition of an optimum yield range, which varies each year according to the characteristics of the crop.

Setting a maximum annual yield, based on the evolution of these parameters, ensures that production is within the optimum yield range for the production of wines that achieve the best balance between the various quality parameters required to produce 'Cognac'. This annual yield therefore lies within an optimum range that includes the climate reserve.

Moreover, the risk of a deterioration in the quality of the wines in the event of an excessive increase in yields has led to the introduction of additional measures regarding the productivity of the vineyards, including the setting of an upper yield limit.

The aromatic quality of the wine spirits depends in large part on the characteristics of the wines used.

The choice of grape varieties and compliance with the specific winemaking rules laid down in the product specification for the 'Cognac' designation make it possible to produce wines with fine, delicate aromas, which are essential for the production of high-quality wine spirits. These wines must not present undesirable notes such as a vegetal character, excess acetaldehyde (an oxidised character), higher alcohols (heaviness), or certain compounds associated with the alteration of wines during storage. In addition to the specification, a number of tailored recommendations have been issued with regard to harvesting and pressing, fermentation, and the preservation of wines awaiting distillation. These recommendations are regularly updated and widely disseminated among winegrowers in the production area.

Expertise in pruning and winemaking:

The acidity and low alcoholic strength are reinforced by the pruning method chosen by the winegrower on the basis of several factors:

— the spacing between the vine rows;

— the height of the trunk and canopy;

— the training system itself: traditional long cane pruning or cordon pruning (including high-trailing or low-trellised cordons).

The grapes are pressed immediately after harvesting in traditional horizontal basket presses or in pneumatic presses. Continuous presses with an Archimedean screw are prohibited. The juice obtained is fermented immediately. Chaptalisation is prohibited.

Pressing and fermentation are carefully monitored, because they will have a decisive influence on the end quality of the wine spirit. To preserve the quality of the future wine spirits, it is prohibited to add sulphur dioxide to distillation wines while they are fermenting.

As a result, the final date for the distillation of white wines used to produce 'Cognac' is 31 March of the year following the harvest, so as to avoid any risk to the preservation of the wines.

Distillation:

The distillation practice carried out in the Cognac region is in line with the principle of single batch distillation with second distillation, known as *repasse* or double distillation, in a pot still known as an *alambic charentais* (Charente still), whose shape, construction material, capacity and heating method have been defined since 1936 and are decisive for the quality of these wine spirits.

Specifically:

— the shape of the still helps select the volatile substances;

— heating over a naked flame produces a synthesis of complementary aromas when the wine comes into contact with the bottom of the boiler (cooking effect);

— the parts of the still that come into contact with the wine, vapours and distillates are made entirely of copper due to its physical properties (malleability, good heat conduction) and its chemical reactivity to certain wine components.

This type of still requires a delicate operation to be carried out at each distillation: the 'cut', which consists of separating the distillate according to its alcoholic strength by volume and its volatile substance composition, i.e. separating the heart and the parts intended for recycling during subsequent distillations. For that reason, and because of the limitation on the load capacity during the second distillation, distillation in the Cognac region remains an artisanal process that takes considerable expertise to master. Distillers will assess when is the right time for these cuts and how to recycle the parts on the basis of the quality of the wines (richness of the lees, alcoholic strength by volume, acidity, etc.) and their qualitative objectives.

Characteristics of the wine spirits according to their geographical name:

The wine spirits obtained as they emerge from the still are characterised by a significant analytical and organoleptic diversity, due in large part to their origin. This diversity calls for different ageing techniques of varying duration.

'Grande Champagne':

'Grande Champagne' produces wine spirits of great finesse with considerable distinction and length, and a predominately floral bouquet. Matured slowly, these wine spirits need lengthy ageing in oak barrels to reach full maturity.

'Petite Champagne':

Its wine spirits have essentially the same characteristics as 'Grande Champagne', but without their extreme finesse.

'Fine Champagne':

'Cognac' sold under the name 'Fine Champagne' has organoleptic characteristics resulting from the blending of 'Grande Champagne' (at least 50 %) and 'Petite Champagne' wine spirits.

'Borderies':

These vineyards produce rounded, aromatic and smooth wine spirits with a scent of violet flower. They are said to reach their optimum quality after a shorter maturation period than the 'Champagne' wine spirits.

'Fins Bois':

'Fins Bois' forms the largest vineyard region, producing rounded, supple wine spirits that age quite quickly, with a fruity bouquet reminiscent of pressed grapes.

The 'Bois' ('Bons Bois', 'Bois ordinaires' and 'Bois à terroirs'):

The 'Bons Bois' produce wine spirits that have fruity aromas and age quickly.

Ageing:

The wine spirits that emerge from the still essentially reflect the quality of the wines from which they are produced.

Ageing is the process that enables the wine spirits to reach maturity; in other words, the stage of development at which their organoleptic characteristics are at their most harmonious.

Ageing occurs exclusively in containers made of oak wood; these containers alone allow these products to mature.

Its duration depends on the characteristics of the wine spirit being aged, the quality of the finished product sought, and the type and age of the oak containers used for ageing.

This includes the extraction of oak compounds, as well as oxidation and many physico-chemical developments essential to obtain the particular sensory characteristics of aged wine spirits, including colouring.

The ageing of 'Cognac' is a process that benefits not only from the region's specific climate conditions, but also from the know-how that has developed in the region over the course of history. As soon as it emerges from the still, the new wine spirit will remain in an oak container for several years (sometimes even decades) in order to age. Various physico-chemical phenomena will then occur: evaporation of the water and alcohol, concentration into various substances, extraction of compounds from the wood, oxidation, etc. These phenomena are influenced by the wine spirit's initial characteristics (such as alcoholic strength and acidity), the type of container in which it is kept, and the physical characteristics of the cellar where the container is stored (temperature, hygrometry and ventilation).

Within the temperate oceanic climate of the 'Cognac' geographical area, ageing is achieved by exposing the wine spirits to conditions of moderate humidity and seasonal alternations that avoid extremes. The cellars are located and built in such a way as to benefit from balanced conditions so that the wine spirit becomes soft and ages in a harmonious manner.

Depending on local custom, fine-grained (Tronçais) or coarse-grained (Limousin) oak – *Quercus petraea* (sessile or durmast oak) or *Quercus robur* (pedunculate oak) – has been chosen because of its ability to enable the wine spirit, the external environment and the oak to interact over lengthy periods. The numerous firms of coopers that have developed in the geographical area have managed, in close cooperation with the 'Cognac' cellar masters, to build up know-how in the production of the most appropriate containers for ageing 'Cognac'. It is the cellar master's job to select the most suitable containers according to the new wine spirit's initial characteristics, the ageing stage, and the qualitative objectives sought.

As the 'Cognac' develops in contact with the oak wood and the air, it gradually loses a fraction of its water and alcohol through evaporation. These alcohol vapours (poetically known as 'the angel's share') represent the equivalent of millions of bottles each year, and feed, near the cellars, a microscopic fungus, *Torula compniacensis*, which covers and blackens the stones of the region.

The ageing of 'Cognac' is inextricably linked to the art of blending, which lies at the heart of the profession of the 'Cognac' cellar masters. Like a painter with his palette, the cellar master selects different batches of 'Cognac' from multiple sources: diverse *crus*, varied age counts, 'Cognac' that has been aged in new or *roux* (red) barrels (which have already contained 'Cognac'), of varied origin, and in different types of cellar (humid or dry).

Each wine spirit has its own organoleptic characteristics that reflect its ageing process, and these characteristics will be enhanced by those of other wine spirits with which they will be blended.

Blending is a complex operation that cannot be based solely on technical recipes. The cellar master relies on empirical knowledge: familiarity with the diversity of the raw material and with the distinctive character of the designation, experience of interactions between the raw material and the ageing factors, and mastery of the required techniques. This requires constant monitoring through tasting and a great sensory memory of wine spirits at the various stages of production.

It has been possible to develop, maintain and pass on this know-how – which requires many years of learning in close contact with elders in the trade – thanks to the dense network of firms in the area and exchanges within the professional community of cellar masters, winegrowers, merchants and brokers.

Link to the product specification

https://info.agriculture.gouv.fr/boagri/document_administratif-284a164d-0a60-4ccf-90c0-80c0ee8c2b5d