CALASPARRA

DESCRIPTION OF THE PRODUCT

Rice for human consumption from the species «Oryza sativa L» of the varieties Bomba and Balilla Sollana.

The protected rice will be:

- White rice: rice from whose ripe grains the cuticles of the pericarp have been partially or totally removed, with a more or less white but always even colour. It comes in the commercial categories «Extra» and «Primera».
- Wholegrain rice: consisting of ripe grains with the outer husk (glume) removed but retaining its pericarp, to which it owes its characteristic brown colour.

The variety most often cultivated is Balilla X Sollana. The specific characteristics are:

CHARACTERISTICS OF RAW, PROCESSED GRAIN

Balilla X Sollana

Grain length	5.30 a 5.60 mm.
Grain width	3.10 mm.
Grain thickness	2.12 mm.
Amylose (%)	20.52 %

MILLING CHARACTERISTICS: GRAIN BEHAVIOUR DURING PROCESSING

Balilla X Sollana Bomba

Total yield	63.00%	49.00%
Breakage %	9.24 %	18.00%

GRAIN COOKING CHARACTERISTICS

Balilla X Sollana

Cooking time	20.0 min.
Water absorption	3.7*
Increase in grain length	49.35%

* Parts water/parts rice: According to the Food Testing Committee of the Supervisory Council

The general characteristics of the Bomba variety are:

- Round harder grain
- Longer cooking time
- Big length increase and great water absorption in cooking.

GEOGRAPHIC AREA

The production area is made up by land lying in the municipal districts of Calasparra and Moratalla, in the province of Murcia, and of Hellín in the province of Albacete.

The processing and packaging areas coincide with the production area.

OBTAINING THE PRODUCT

Harvesting begins at the time laid down by the Supervisory Council.

Once harvested it is sent on to the processing plants or cooperatives, where it is submitted to the following processes:

Drying: elimination of any excess water in the grain, until it is reduced to 15%.

Storage: once dried, the rice is stored in silos or stores until the milling process.

Milling: elimination of glumes and cuticles of the pericarp until the kernels have the polished white appearance for being marketed as white rice.

In whole-grain rice only the glumes are removed leaving the grain still covered by its pericarp.

Cleaning: Separation of foreign bodies by air and vibration

Packaging: Introduction of rice into the authorised packets, using automatic batchers.

Control of extrinsic quality: Operation to guarantee that packages comply with tolerances laid down in corresponding legislation in terms of weight, foreign bodies, defective grains, etc.

Labelling: fitting of commercial labels and official numbered scheme-labels to the package.

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Rice growing dates back a long way in the area of Calasparra. The ancient cultivation techniques, still employed today, are vouched for by City Council Minutes and diverse documents dating right back to the C15th, bearing testimony to the importance of these cultivation systems. Several irrigation inheritance reports also contain accounts of farmers regulating rice cultivation and irrigation systems in 1785. Documents of 1907 also tell us that the area was once governed by a Real Orden (Royal Order) de San Juan de Malta authorising rice growing in the land of this region.

Today's farmers possess a document transcribing a 1908 Royal Decree of the Ministry of Public Works declaring certain land of Calasparra and Moratalla to be «Coto Arrocero», or official rice-growing land.

NATURAL FEATURES

Lie of the Land. The production area thus denominated «Coto Arrocero» is set in a mountainous, uneven terrain running alongside the River Segura. For most of its course the river runs through narrow, steep-sided valleys but every now and then the valley bottom widens out somewhat into small areas of meadowland. These areas and the narrow strip of land along the river itself constitute the growing areas. Its ecological setting is clearly different, since it is grown in a sunny, mountainous area with a height of between 341 and 500 metres above sea level.

Soil. In general the soil is dun-coloured limestone over consolidated material, alternating in some areas with compound marl and dun-coloured limestone.

Climate. The climate is Mediterranean with annual average temperatures below 15º, hot summers and harsh winters, with annual rainfall of below 400 mm.

Hydrography. The most important river is the Segura, which flows through the production area from northwest to southeast. Its main tributary is the River Mundo.

Growing Conditions

Land Preparation. Crop rotations are practised to get the best out of the land, the most frequent system being:

- April/May to October/November: Rice
- November to June: Wheat
- June to December: Maize
- December to April: Leguminous plants

This two-year cycle is then repeated, enriching the soil and avoiding any exhaustion of its resources.

The leguminous plants from the last cycle are ploughed back as an input of green fertiliser for the rice growing. Then water is let into the plots, divided into paddies sloping gently down towards the river.

Sowing and Cultivation. Once the water has reached all the paddies the rice seed is broadcast by hand.

The rice is left covered by about 7 to 8 cm of water until the germination of the plant. Once the plant has germinated the weeds are removed by hoeing and plants are introduced into any gaps where no rice plant has come through.

In July the crop is fertilised. In the case of ecological cultivation the fertiliser used will abide by the corresponding legislation. The water level is maintained throughout the whole growing cycle, the water finally being removed 8 to 10 days before harvesting when the grains are mature.

Harvesting. Once the water has been removed and the land is dry enough the rice is harvested and taken off to the mills for the drying process to start.