

Data on Italy's Carryover Olive Oil Stocks Too 'Sensitive' to Release

Details of Italy's olive oil stocks at the start of the current season can't be released because the "commercially sensitive information" could disturb the market, the European Commission has told Olive Oil Times.

The Commission's transparency unit was responding to a request for details of Italy's carryover stocks for the last three years. It agreed to release the figure for last year, said it found no documents covering that for the previous year – because the

obligation to send the data started in July 2012 – and refused to release that for the current season because "this kind of information can specifically influence olive oil market prices and disturb...the market."

In such cases the data can only be released "if there is an overriding public interest in disclosure," which was not found to be the case, it said. Olive Oil Times has exercised its right to ask for a review of the decision.

The data the Commission did release shows Italy declared olive oil production of 409,140 tons, consumption of 695,000 tons and end-of-year stocks of 102,897 tons for the 2012/13 marketing year, which runs from July 1, 2012 to June 30, 2013.

Italian politician queries "177,000 ton shortfall"

The information on carryover stocks was sought partly in response to a written question in the European Parliament in November by Italian MEP Mara Bizzotto (EFD). Headed "Extra virgin olive oil made in Italy: one bottle in five fake", the text of Bizzotto's question said analysis of production, import, export and consumption figures showed that in Italy, there is not "enough olive oil for everyone: there is a shortfall of 177,000 tons."

She went on to refer to scams such as "substituting olive oil with cheaper seed oil, adding beta-carotene and chlorophyll to give it a similar appearance to that of the more prized product," and asked what was being done to protect Italian consumers. Bizzotto's office said her letter was prompted by an article in Italy's online consumer affairs magazine *Il Salvagente*.

Monthly updates available on Spanish olive oil stocks

Provisional data published separately by the Commission and supplied by the International Olive Council for Italy for the official olive oil season – October 2012 to September 2013 –

lists production of 415,500 tons, consumption of 590,000 tons (an average of 9.67kg for each of Italy's estimated 61.5 million inhabitants), exports of 336,400 tons and imports of 455,800 tons.

This means the total of consumption and exports exceeded the total of production and imports by 55,100 tons but the starting and finishing stocks are not stated, nor is there a breakdown for the extra virgin category.

In Spain, by far the world's biggest olive oil producer, details of olive oil stocks are published online by the Food Chain Information Agency (AICA) and updated monthly.

Source : <http://www.oliveoiltimes.com/olive-oil-business/europe/data-italys-carryover-olive-oil-stocks-sensitive-release/39210b> (10/04/2014)