

## Mercadona anchovy, sardine supplier embarks on €8m expansion

Spanish processor Grupo Gil Comes, which supplies Spain's largest supermarket chain Mercadona, intends to invest €8 million by 2016 to expand and diversify its production at home and in Morocco, a spokesperson told *Undercurrent News*.

The anchovy and sardine processor will spend half of this budget to automatize its plant in Vinaroz, in the Spanish province of Castellon. The plant will be furnished with new equipment for packaging as well as new freezers to store fish.

The remaining funds will be spent on one of the two plants the company operates in Morocco. The plan there is to expand into new products.

Specifically, Gil Comes plans to diversify its product portfolio with new semi-preserved lines, such as plastic deli pot marinated sardines and cured anchovies with an air-tight lid to retain the freshness.

### **Tapping into the love of tapas**

Grupo Gil Comes says it processed 7,000 metric tons last year. Turnover reached €66m in 2014, up 4.7% year-on-year, a growth the group attributed to new fish tapas (more below).

Nearly all of its turnover comes from its contract with Mercadona. The Spanish supermarket chain accounts for 80% of Gil Comes' annual revenue, while foodservice represents another 15%, the spokesperson told *Undercurrent*. Exports are also small, at just 1% of revenues last year, with Italy the only market. However, the company has set as a goal to up its sales abroad.

Grupo Gil Comes said its turnover growth reflects a momentum in sales of fish tapas in Spain.

It is not the first Spanish supplier to mention this. Last September, Catalan fish tapas specialist Picar & Picar told *Undercurrent* that it had tripled its sales volumes year-on-year in local supermarket chains.

Despite tough times for Spanish households, the '*tapas*' culture in Spain remains deeply rooted, Picar & Picar's director Francesc Fontanillas said at the time, speaking during Seafood Expo Southern Europe 2014 trade show in Barcelona.

"Any time is good to consume anchovies in vinegar (*boquerones en vinagre*, in Spanish), herring with olives or sardines with basil -- a few of the multiple pelagic fish tapas the company offers," Fontanillas had said.

Source : [http://www.undercurrentnews.com/2015/01/28/mercadona-anchovy-sardine-supplier-embarks-on-8m-expansion/?utm\\_source=Undercurrent+News+Alerts&utm\\_campaign=a10ad2ff4b-Retail\\_foodservice\\_Jan\\_28\\_2015&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_feb55e2e23-a10ad2ff4b-92423501](http://www.undercurrentnews.com/2015/01/28/mercadona-anchovy-sardine-supplier-embarks-on-8m-expansion/?utm_source=Undercurrent+News+Alerts&utm_campaign=a10ad2ff4b-Retail_foodservice_Jan_28_2015&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_feb55e2e23-a10ad2ff4b-92423501)