

Olive oil imports likely to rise 20% in 2016-17

New Delhi, Sep 22 (PTI) India's olive oil imports are expected to rise 20 per cent to 13,500 tonnes this fiscal on the back of rising demand in metros and tier II cities, a top Indian Olive Association official said.

The country had imported 11,106 tonnes of olive oils, 65 per cent of which is sourced from Spain, in 2015-16 fiscal.

"Imports have been encouraging so far and we are hopeful the total imports during the year would rise by 20 per cent to 13,500 tonnes," Indian Olive Association (IOA) President Rajneesh Bhasin told PTI.

The country has imported 3,062 tonnes of olive oils in the April-June period of the 2016-17 fiscal, which is 19 per cent higher than 2,583 tonnes in the year-ago period, he said, a similar growth is expected in the coming quarters.

During the last year, Bhasin said that the olive oil imports fell because of high global prices in view of poor crop in Spain, as well as hike in import duty of edible oils and weak Rupee against Euro, he said.

"However, the crop prospects this year look bright in Spain and we hope this will bring down global prices. Rupee is also strong against Euro this time. All these factors should reduce the cost of produce at the source and boost imports," Bhasin said.

That apart, the domestic demand for olive oils is growing in tier II cities as well as in metros, he added.

Bhasin said the share of Pomace olive oil in total imports is coming down as consumers are switching towards Extra light variants.

India largely imports olive oil from Spain, Italy and Turkey. While India consumes 17 million tonnes of edible oils but the share of olive oil is only 0.1 per cent. More than 90 brands are competing for such a small share of market.

The top three brands in the domestic market, which together control more than 70 per cent of retail sales, are Leonardo, Figaro and Borges (including Cesar). Some other prominent brands include RS, Bertolli, Del Monte, Fragata, Colavita and Athena. PTI LUX ABK