

## Europe: Melon market trends

With 45,000 tons, Italian melon exports in 2016 increased by 31% compared to 2015. The value also increased, reaching almost €30 million, i.e. 17% more than the previous campaign. The average price dropped by 11% to €0.66/kg, among the lowest for the period considered.

The main destination markets remain EU28 countries, which absorb 93% of the total, the highest percentage of the past six years and an increase compared to the previous campaign.

Germany is the main outlet market (28% of the total) with higher quantities compared to the past campaign and an increasing trend. The Czech Republic comes in second place with 17%, followed by Austria with 9%, the UK and the Netherlands with 7% and around 3,100 tons each, and Croatia and Slovenia with 4% and around 1,800 tons.

The remaining 7% of the volume is shipped to Extra-EU28 countries and mainly to Switzerland.

Melons are mostly exported between June and September, with 2016 registering an increase in the quantity exported throughout the entire commercialisation period. The majority of the shipments were carried out in August, over 11,000 tons in 2016 (26%), while 10,000 tons (23%) were exported in June. May and July also saw a slight increase with respectively 3,000 and 9,500 tons (7 and 21% of the total).

In 2016, melon imports decreased by 15% compared with the previous year. With 30,000 tons, it's the lowest quantity since 2011. The value, approximately €28 million, dropped by 20% due to an average price of €0.94/kg.

63% of imported melons comes from EU28 countries. The origins are the usual but quantities are lower. Holland is the main supplier with 23% of the total, followed by France with 21% and Spain (14%). Belgium and Germany are at a distance with 2% of the total.

Imports from American countries also diminished: there was a slight increase in the quantities exported by Brazil (25%), while those from Costa Rica halted at 9%. Only 3% of foreign melons comes from African countries and mainly from Senegal (2%).

Foreign melons reach Italy mainly from February to May and from November to December. During the past campaign, volumes arriving in March increased with over 4,500 tons. April remains the month with the highest imports, even though quantities

dropped a little compared to the previous year (approx. 5,800 tons against the 6,400 of 2015). Volumes in May also dropped, with approx. 2,700 tons compared to the 4,600 of the past season. In November, volumes rose to 3,600 tons compared to the 2,700 of 2015 and they also increased in December with 3,300 tons. Less produce was imported in summer.

The leading melon exporter in Europe is Spain with around 420 thousand tons on average (2011/2016). The main outlet is France, which absorbed approx. 120 thousand tons during the past campaign, followed by Germany with over 100 thousand tons, the UK with 57 thousand tons, the Netherlands with 53 thousand tons and Portugal with 10 thousand tons.

After Spain, the Netherlands is the main exporter, as it re-exports counter-seasonal produce from Brazil, Costa Rica and Honduras as well as some produce from Spain. Then there are France and Italy with similar quantities of around 45 thousand tons in 2016. Italy registered a slight increase while France remained stable with most volumes shipped to Switzerland (14,000 tons) and Belgium (13,000 tons).

According to the GfK data processed by CSO Italy, the melon market has been doing rather well in Italy. With approx. 228 thousand tons for the second year running, this vegetable reached record quantities.

Comparing the per-head consumption of 2016 (3.76 kg) with that of the early Noughties (3.29 kg), the difference is of around half a kilo per person. This trend pays off the varietal innovation of the past few years as well as the new tools that guarantee the sugar level of the produce.

In 2016, the average purchasing price was €1.32/kg, leading to a total business volume just below €300,000 thousand (-2.2% on 2015).

Street markets are not doing well, as the volumes sold have halved in ten years, though greengrocers have been doing better in the past couple of years. Retailers remain below 64% of the total - supermarkets sell around 35% of melons, hypermarkets sell 13% and discounts rose to 15%. Street vendors sell 12% of the total, while specialised traders rose to 23%.

Data regarding apparent consumption in Spain show that, during the past five years, over 450,000 tons of melons a year have been purchased on average. During 2011/2015, little less than 400,000 tons of melons a year were consumed. The Netherlands, which do not produce melons, bought around 64/65,000 tons of melons during the period analysed.