

EVOO in Japan: Spain continues to lead exports

According to the latest data from ICEX, with 59% of the volume and 51% of the total value of olive oil exports, Spain continues to be the leading exporting country in the olive oil market in Japan, a nation totally dependent on imports of olive oil. The report also highlights that 77% of the imported olive oil corresponds to extra virgin.

As reflected in the latest ICEX report, "The Olive Oil Market in Japan" dated on January 2018, Japan is a very important expanding market for Spanish companies in the sector. Its dependence on the importation of this product is almost total since there is no national production. In general terms, Japan imported 57,031 tons of olive oil, worth 35,459 million yen (269,488 million euros) in 2017, of which 77% was extra virgin olive oil.

Displacing Italy since 2015, Spain leads exports of olive oil in Japan. In fact, Spain ended the year 2017 with a total of 33,758 tons and 18,906 million yen (143,685 million euros) exported to Japan compared to 20,610 tons and 14,773 million yen (112,274 million euros) reached by Italian oils. This supposes a quota of 59% of the volume and 51% of the value, compared to the 35% and 42% of Italy, respectively.

By types of oil, always according to ICEX' data, Spain is also positioned as the main exporter in volume in the three categories: extra virgin olive oil, olive oil and other oils, with 58.9%, 36.7% and 37.8% volume share respectively.

Despite the clear dominance in volume of Spanish oils, if extra virgin olive oil is taken care of, Italy, with less exported volume, obtains a larger value share, which responds to the higher price per liter of Italian oils.

Although Spain and Italy share almost 95% of the market, there are also other competitors in the market such as Greece, Turkey, Australia and Chile. Among them stands out Turkey, which is behind Italy with a share of 1.7% in volume and 1.4% in value.

Oil consumption in Japan

Japan is configured as the third non-European and non-producing country that imports the most olive oil in the world (57,031 tons in 2017), equivalent to 2.8% of the world's imports of this product. However, the consumption of olive oil per capita in Japan is still much lower than in other countries, where it is not part of the traditional diet either.

According to data from the International Olive Council (IOC) reflected in the report, 64% of Japanese consumers prefer olive oil, with a per capita consumption of 350 grams per year, very low figures compared with other countries.

Currently, there is a very active olive oil promotion, undertaken by both Japanese and foreign institutions. However, the report states that the Spanish promotion can be intensified. The study also notes an effort on the part of the exporting companies to increase the size and variety of their offer and highlights the convenience of making an effort to adapt the packaging to Japanese consumption habits. While initially 100 ml. containers were the most popular, currently the most claimed are 250 and 500 ml.

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