

# French cherry production under threat from fruit fly

French cherry production is under threat from the *Drosophila Suzukii* fruit fly, which lays its eggs in the cherries once mature. The larvae feed off the fruit's flesh which then rots and the cherries cannot be sold. In ten years French cherry production has plummeted from 60,000 tons to 35,000 tons.

The fruit fly is not the only factor to blame, international competition is also largely responsible as labour costs elsewhere are often lower than in France. French producers have to rely on the quality of their produce, which has become even harder since 2016 when the government banned the strong pesticide, dimethoate, the only pesticide that can kill the fruit fly. In 2014, 20% of cherries on the market contained doses of dimethoate higher than the authorised amount (1mg/kilo rather than the authorised 0.2mg/kilo). Despite the risks associated with the pesticide (heart and respiratory complications, mainly amongst farmers), some producers, notably in the Vaucluse, went so far as to cut down their trees in front of the TV cameras in 2016 in protest at the new law.

Solutions to fight the fly are being researched, among them is netting around the trees, this is very effective but expensive (€60,000/hectare, profitable after 8 years). Since dimethoate has been banned, production plummeted by 10% in 2016 before increasing in 2017 thanks to the favorable weather.

Some producers have come up with homemade traps, mixtures of wine, grenadine, washing up liquid etc that they hang from the trees. Others have turned to organic farming and produce early varieties that grow before the peak in fruit flies in May. Despite a 20% decrease in yield, organic cherries can be sold for a 25% premium.

**Liens articles :** <http://www.freshplaza.com/article/193929/French-cherry-production-under-threat-from-fruit-fly>