



## The EU, in favor of maintaining tariff advantages for Tunisian olive oil

**According to the Spanish association Unión de Uniones, the European Commission is in favor of extending the tariff concessions to Tunisia, which would allow the entry of olive oil to the EU at zero cost. The Tunisian government has requested the EU to continue this exceptional trade measures for olive oil that expired at the end of 2017.**

Recently the European Commissioner of Agriculture, Phil Hogan has confirmed in the European Parliament -answering a question from the Italian MEP, Mara Bizzoti- that the Commission is looking favourably the extension of the exceptional measures that Tunisia has enjoyed until the past year in order to place its oil in the EU at zero tariff.

Unión de Uniones appreciates that Tunisia's request has enough signs to move forward, according to the Commissioner, who has informed that the request was examined taking into account that the regular tariff quota provided for in the EU-Tunisia Association Agreement for Olive Oil has a modest impact on the situation in the EU market.

As an argument, Phil Hogan also provides that, in the last five years, 79% of Tunisia's total olive oil exports have been allocated to the EU, but that this percentage is equivalent to 4.8% of the EU's average production in the same period. Even after the tariff quota has been exhausted, the EU olive oil sector continues to buy Tunisian olive oil under the inward processing regime (mechanisms by which oil is brought, processed in the EU and returned to Tunisia).

The Commissioner also recalled the announcement made by the president of the European Commission on April 24, referring to that new trade concessions can be agreed by mutual agreement of the parties as set out in Article 18 of the EU-Tunisia Association Agreement.

### Quota system

In fact, last April, the Tunisian Prime Minister, Youssef Chahed, said in Brussels that he hoped that the EU would increase the quota of Tunisian olive oil and even eliminate the quota system. This regime allowed in 2016 the entry for two years of 35,000 annual tons of this product to the community block.



After that meeting, both expressed their desire to conclude the negotiations of the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area between now and the end of 2019 between the European Union and Tunisia.

The EU and Tunisia already enjoy a free trade area since 1995, when they signed their association agreement, but it is limited to the progressive abolition of customs duties on manufactured products and some concessions for exchanges of agricultural products.

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