

# Promoting Sustainable Production and Consumption Patterns: The example of olive oil – INFOIL



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INFOIL (LIFE08 INF/GR/000581) is a LIFE+ Information and Communication project. The aim of the project is to promote sustainable production and consumption patterns using the example of olive oil aiming at the minimization of the environmental impacts related with olive oil production, especially in regions with very high yield. INFOIL will also promote the importance of life cycle assessment (LCA) during the production and consumption process contributing to the environmental impacts identification and prevention.

#### Partners:

- Technical University of Crete Department of Production Engineering and Management
- National Agricultural Research Foundation (NAGREF) - Institute of Olive Tree and Subtropical Plants of Chania (ISPOT), Laboratory of Oliviculture and Postharvest Physiology
- ILEIAKI S.A. - Development Company of Ilea Prefecture (ILEIAKI)
- Musuron Municipality Development Enterprise (MUDE), (Chania)

## The olive oil sector in the European Union

The sector consists of growers, cooperatives, pressing mills, refiners, blenders, and companies involved in various aspects of marketing. Three broad types of production can be distinguished: traditional groves, often of ancient olive trees; more managed traditional plantations involving a higher use of inputs; and intensive, generally recent, plantations using more mechanisation and other technologies including irrigation.

This mix of ancient and modern helps explain the differing farm sizes, ownership characteristics and processing structures that exist within the EU. Likewise, large differences in production systems occur within each producing region. The average holding size is as low as 1 hectare in, for example, Italy, though olive holdings in Spain are larger (6 hectares on average).



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## Olive oil production world-wide

Source: European Commission

Olive trees have been grown for olives and olive oil since ancient times. At the time of the Roman Empire olive-growing was practised throughout the Mediterranean; nowadays, with 98% of the world's olive trees, the area around the Mediterranean accounts for the bulk of world olive oil production.

There are currently several categories of olive oil on the market. Virgin oils, which are extracted mechanically, direct from the olives, comprise the "extra virgin" and "virgin" classes of olive oil - ready for consumption - and lampante olive oil, which has to be refined. "Composed" olive oil is a blend of refined and "virgin" or "extra virgin" olive oil.

The Community is the dominant player on the olive oil market. Until 1981 its 425 000 tonnes accounted for only one third of world production and it was a net importer. In 1981, after the accession of Greece, Community production went up by about 300 000 tonnes to about half the total for the world as a whole. In 1986, after Spain and Portugal joined, the EC became the market reference, averaging 80% of world production. The 1990s saw a rapid rise in production in the Community as a result of increases in acreages and yields. Compared with harvests in the early 1990s the average production for the last three marketing years doubled in Spain, while Italy and Greece recorded increases of 16% and 18% respectively.

	EU	Turkey	Tunisia	Morocco	Other	Total	EU/Total
1995/96	1518	46	84	65	40	97	1849
1996/97	1899	203	125	291	85	107	2710
1997/98	294	41	70	95	74	56	2630
1998/99	1838	171	115	222	69	130	2545
1999/00	1873	54	81	220	44	120	2392
2000/01	2090	176	165	135	38	121	2725
2001/02	2650	66	92	37	64	110	3019
2002/03	2044	142	165	73	43	125	2552

Wide fluctuations in production are a feature of olive-growing. They are linked to the uncertainties of the climate (viz. drought in Spain in 1995/96 and frost in Greece in 2001/02) and alternate bearing, a characteristic of olive trees whereby bumper crops tend to be followed by lower production the following year.

Marketing year	Spain	Italy	Greece	Portugal	France	Total
1992/93	623,1	435	310	22	1,6	1391,7
1993/94	550,9	520	254	32,1	2,3	1359,3
1994/95	538,8	448	350	32,2	2	1371
1995/96	337,6	620	400	43,7	2,3	1403,6
Average	512,6	505,75	328,5	32,5	2,1	1381,4
1996/97	947,3	370	390	44,8	2,5	1754,6
1997/98	1077	620	375	42	2,7	2116,7
1998/99	791,9	403,5	473	35,1	3,4	1706,9
1999/00	669,1	735	420	50,2	4,1	1878,4
Average	871,3	532,1	414,5	43	3,2	1864,2
2000/01	973,7	509	430	24,6	3,2	1940,5
2001/02	1411,4	656,7	358,3	33,7	3,6	2463,7
2002/03	865	590	375	29	4,7	1863,7
Average	1083,4	585,2	387,8	29,1	3,8	2089,3

For more information about the project please visit:

[www.infoil.tuc.gr](http://www.infoil.tuc.gr)

## Informational Centre

Within the framework of the European Project «INFOIL» an Informational Centre is created to inform and to promote sustainable production and consumption such as olive oil. Supervisors for the informational project in Crete are Technical University of Crete, Institute of Olive tree & Subtropical Plants of Chania and Musuron Municipality Development enterprise which now belongs to the Municipality of Platanias.

The Informational Centre is located at Katre Street at the city-centre of Chania near the old port.

The program includes information on obtaining reliable results from recent research projects and pilot expertise to the wide dissemination of messages and information related to sustainable production and consumption of products such as olive oil). The main target groups of information are the producers and consumers as well as all types of stakeholders and businesses.

The Center will operate for the next years as a meeting point and networking among supporters of sustainable production and consumption of products, providing:

- Free information on organic production of olive oil
- Active promotion of "green products" on the market and the benefits arising from the use of products produced following environmental principles.
- Targeted education and information to producers on the measures they can take to reduce environmental impact.

In the Centre there will be informative material, magazines, presentations, olive oil tasting, etc. available to registered members of the Center and visitors, regarding sustainability in rural and especially olive oil production and consumption, Registration and information about the center can be obtained through the web portal [www.infoil.gr](http://www.infoil.gr).



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## Quality enhancement

Given the strong, positive image of olive oil products, the importance of olive growing in many EU Member States, and the EU's predominance in the world market for olive oil, the major aim of future olive oil policy will be to enhance the quality of the product even further.

In establishing the transitional regime in 1998, the definitions of categories of olive oil were amended to establish tighter standards and to take into account modern and more effective methods of sensory analysis.

These were made more precise in 2001 as part of an ongoing campaign to encourage producers to concentrate on the quality of the oil. Standards currently in place set a new definition for olive-pomace oils and allow a clearer distinction to be made between these oils and lampante virgin oils.

Rules were also adopted to improve analysis methods, to establish product quality and to set procedures for the establishment of testing panels according to Commission Regulation (EC) No 796/2002 of 6 May 2002 amending Regulation (EEC) No 2568/91 on the characteristics of olive oil and olive-pomace oil and on the relevant methods of analysis, and the additional notes in the annex to Council Regulation (EEC) No 2658/87 on the tariff and statistical nomenclature and on the Common Customs Tariff.

Source: European Commission – Directorate-General for Agriculture



*For more information visit the portal:*

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