# Date market

# Non-stop growth


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**Date production is still for the most part the preserve of the Middle East and North Africa, where it is a traditional crop. It has seen remarkable growth over the past decade, with consumption increasingly extending outside of the production zones.**

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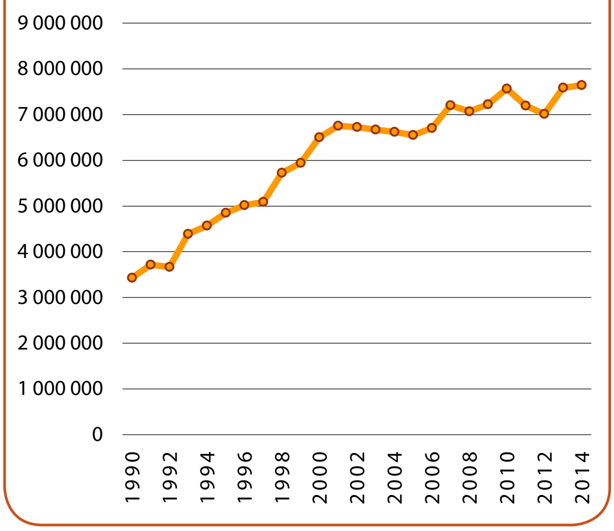
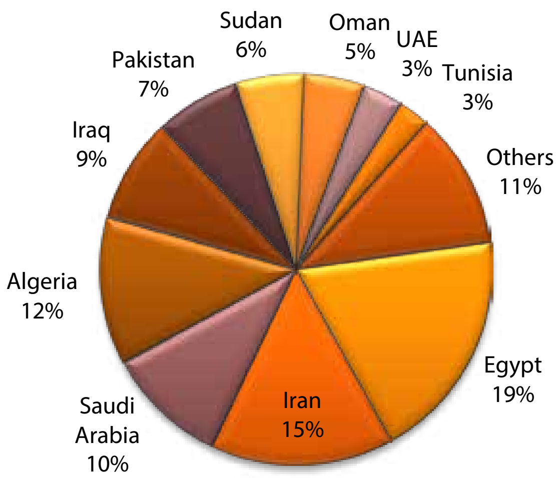
**Date - Evolution of world production**
(in tonnes / Source: FAO)




**Date - Main world producers in 2014**
(Source: FAO)




**Date – Top 10 producer countries in 2014**

| Ranking | Countries | in tonnes |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Egypt | 1 465 030 |
| 2 | Iran | 1 156 996 |
| 3 | Saudi Arabia | 766 800 |
| 4 | Algeria | 934 377 |
| 5 | Iraq | 662 447 |
| 6 | Pakistan | 537 204 |
| 7 | Sudan | 430 000 |
| 8 | Oman | 382 392 |
| 9 | United Arab Emirates | 255 182 |
| 10 | Tunisia | 199 000 |
| | Others | 855 887 |

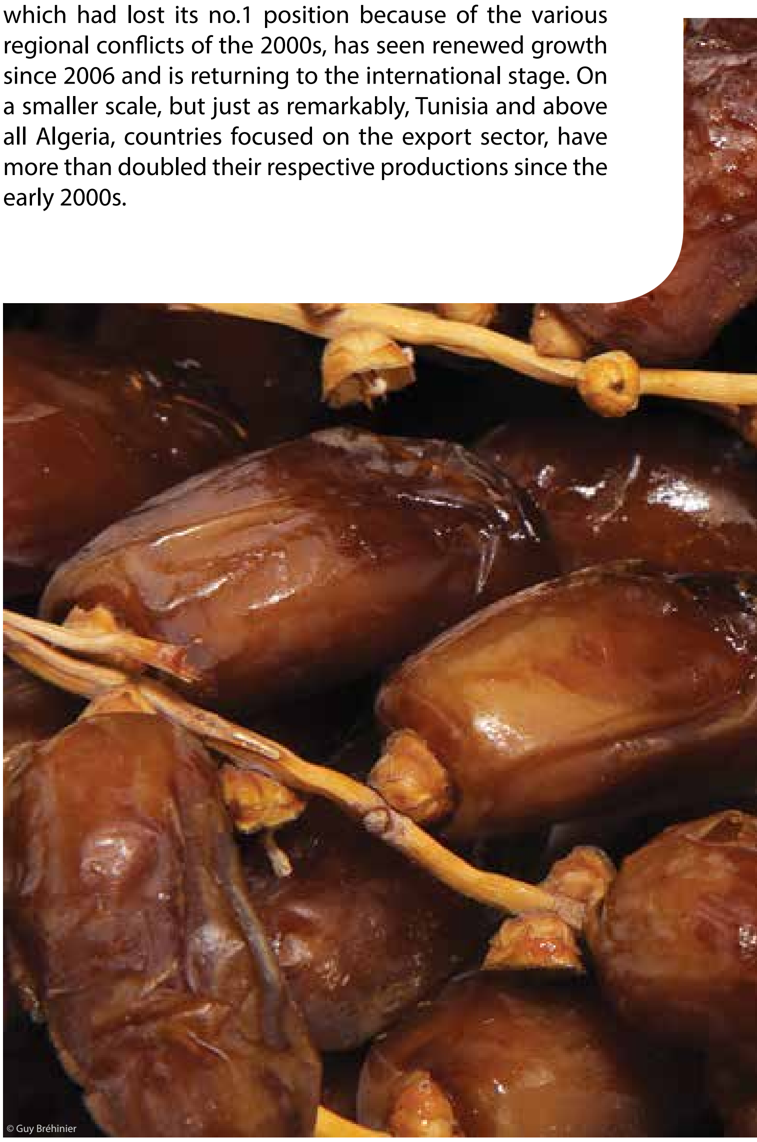
Source: FAO

## Traditional producer countries still leading the way

The date, a crop grown worldwide (Africa, North & South America, Asia), is to this day produced mainly by its historical cradle, the Middle East and North Africa, which account for 90 % of world production.

Over the years, the main production zones have been hit by numerous geopolitical conflicts. Hence the steep growth observed until the early 2000s stalled until 2005, only restarting in 2006 at a more moderate tempo. In 2014, world production was more than 7.6 million tonnes.

Production growth can be observed in all producer countries, especially the major traditional countries, where it is dazzling and constant (Egypt, Iran, Saudi Arabia). Egypt has consolidated its position as number one since the late 1990s, providing nearly 20 % of world production. Iraq, which had lost its no.1 position because of the various regional conflicts of the 2000s, has seen renewed growth since 2006 and is returning to the international stage. On a smaller scale, but just as remarkably, Tunisia and above all Algeria, countries focused on the export sector, have more than doubled their respective productions since the early 2000s.



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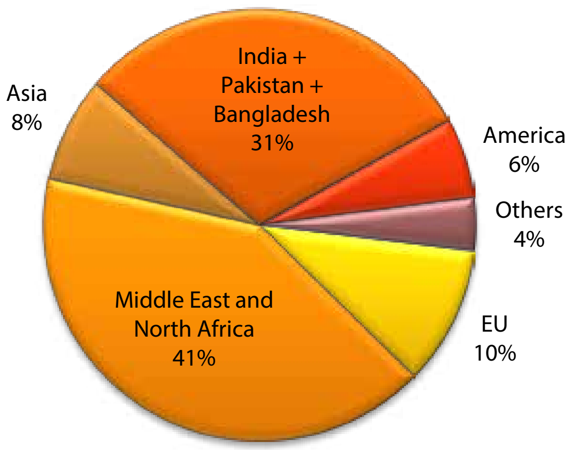
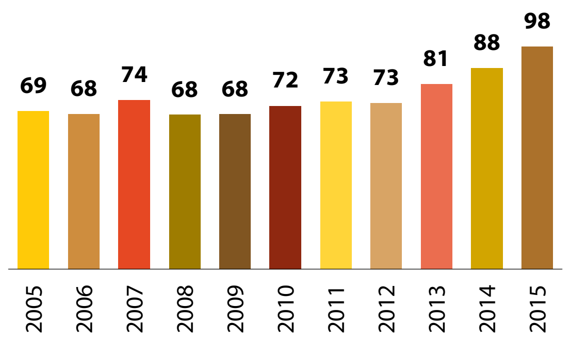
## Self-consumption still the main outlet

Although exports, on average between 900 000 tonnes and 1 000 000 tonnes per year, have been on the up since the early 1990s, self-consumption remains the main outlet for world production. Indeed an estimated 87 % of volumes in the producer countries are consumed domestically. This applies to Egypt, the world's main producer, where this share represents approximately 97 % of its production. The date remains much prized in its historical cradle of the Middle East and North Africa, in particular during the Ramadan period. Its fragility also encourages the focus on the local market, since once mature, the date can only keep for a few days. So sorting rejects are high and it requires sometimes costly storage, drying, refrigeration and sometimes even freezing infrastructures to ensure good export quality.

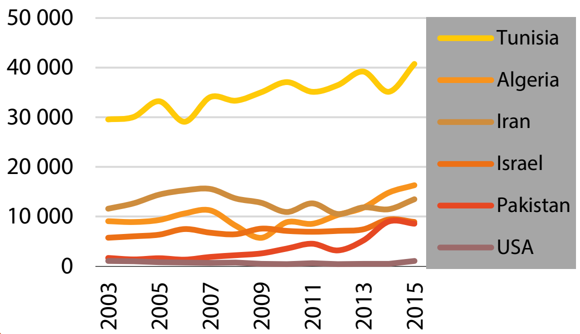
**Date - Main import zones in 2015**
(Sources: Trademap, Eurostat)



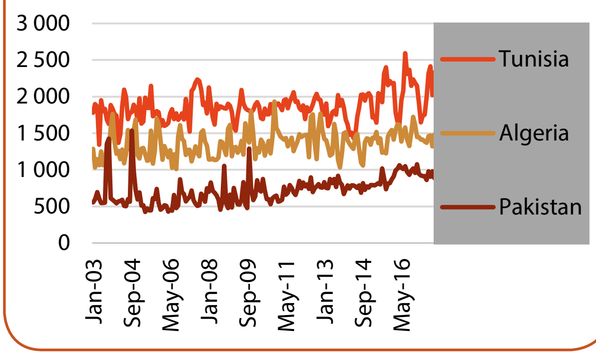

**Date - EU-28 - Evolution of imports**
(in 000 tonnes / Source: Eurostat)



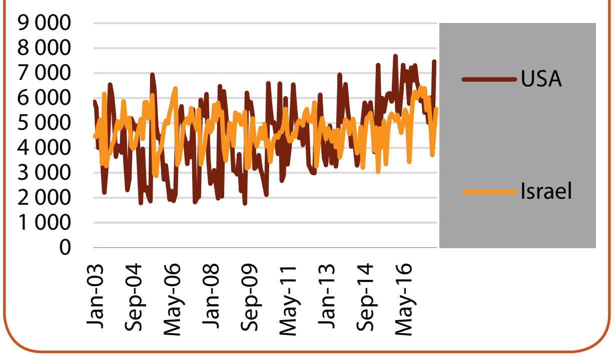

**Date - EU-28 - Main supplier countries**
(in tonnes / Source: Eurostat)




**Date - EU-28 - Customs value for various sources**
(in euro/tonne / Source: Eurostat)




**Date - EU-28 - Customs value for various sources**
(in euro/tonne / Source: Eurostat)

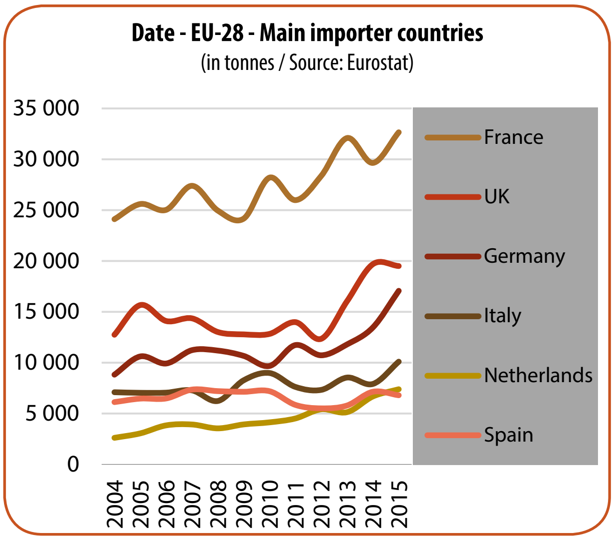


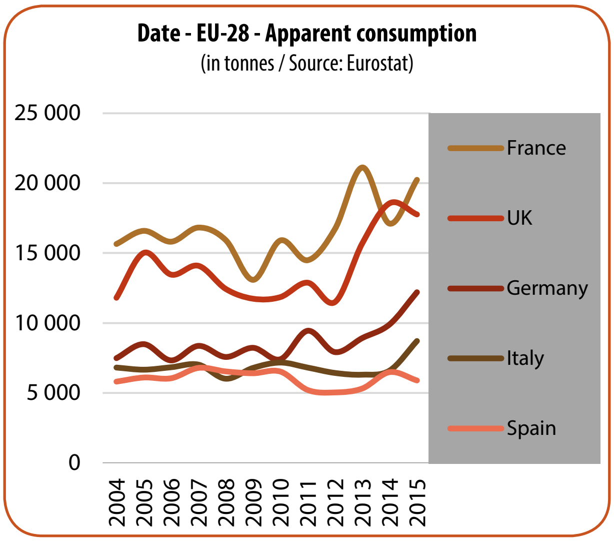

# All lights at green in Europe

The regional trade dominates date flows: 80 % of volumes sold worldwide are imported by countries in North Africa, the Middle East and the Indian Peninsula.

Thus, out of the one million tonnes exported on average worldwide, the EU-28 imports just 10 %, i.e. a relatively very modest proportion, which has been stable for the past decade. However, in absolute terms and after a long stagnation period, imports registered a rise of more than 20 000 tonnes between 2012 and 2015: a remarkable performance for a product which hitherto was just a niche product reserved for consumption by ethnic populations mainly during festive periods (Ramadan, end-of-year holidays).

This growth relates to nearly all suppliers. Indisputably, Tunisia, which exports more than 50 % of its production (see **FruiTrop** no.239, March 2016, p. 26 – The date in Tunisia), has consolidated its leadership as the main supplier to the European market, and continued its ascent. Yet the breakthrough by certain sources, albeit still secondary, is just as remarkable given their record performances since 2012. This is the case for Pakistan (+ 169 %), which has become the leading supplier to the United Kingdom in a few years with very competitively-priced dates, Algeria (+ 58 %) which is now the no. 2 supplier to the European market, or the United States (+ 167 %), which though still very modest with its top-of-the-range variety Medjoul, has doubled its volumes entering the European market.


This growth relates to all three date market segments. The entry level, typified by dried Deglet Nour, is dominated by Tunisia and Algeria, and is continuing to grow. We should note the breakthrough of sources exhibiting high price competitiveness (Pakistan, Algeria).

The most select segment, top-of-the-range fresh, represented by the Medjoul variety from the United States and Israel (see **FruiTrop** no.239, March 2016, p. 32 – The date in Israel), is seeing its prices rise, and is also expanding, though in more moderate proportions.

Finally, the industrial segment remains stable, with the use of common varieties from Pakistan, the United Arab Emirates or Iran.

With nearly 33 000 tonnes imported in 2015, France has kept its historical position as the number one date importer on the European market. For reasons of historical ties and logistical proximity, it acts as a hub, re-exporting to its European neighbours 40 % of volumes – i.e. a stable proportion – imported primarily from Tunisia and Algeria (90 % of the French supply).

On the consumption side, France also remains the European leader, with an annual consumption fluctuating on average around 300 grams per capita since 2012, and which remains highly seasonal (Ramadan, end-of-year holidays). However, consumption in the United Kingdom has been distinctly on the rise for the past five years, nearing the French level. We should also note the breakthrough by German consumption since 2013, probably associated with a growing ethnic population ■

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