

Exporting fresh persimmons to Europe

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Persimmons are relatively new on the European market. In Northern Europe, the persimmon can even be considered an exotic fruit, but its consumption is growing steadily and consumers are getting more used to its taste. Spain is the dominant supplier of persimmons to the European market, holding great sway over it. The summer months offer the best window of opportunities for exporters from developing countries, especially when Spanish supplies end for the season.

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1. Product description

Persimmon cultivars (*Diospyros kaki*) are divided into two categories:

- 'Astringent' persimmons, which can only be consumed ripe or overripe because of the high tannin content.
- 'Non-astringent' persimmons, which can be eaten with minimum maturity.

Depending on the variety, persimmons can be consumed hard, ripe or overripe (glazed), with or without skin.

The most common varieties traded in Europe are Kaki, Sharon, Triumph and Fuyu.

- Kaki: Although normally high in tannin, Spain has developed a kaki variety (Rojo Brillante) that is seedless and ripens faster than other varieties.
- Sharon: A popular Israeli-bred variety. It is non-astringent, less round than the Kaki variety and practically free of seeds and tannin.
- Fuyu: One of the most widely produced varieties in the world. It is non-astringent and seedless. Brazil grows and exports persimmons of this variety to Europe.
- Triumph: A variety that is often seedless. It is similar to the Sharon variety, but it is astringent.

Table1: Combined Nomenclature (CN) commodity code for fresh persimmons

Number	Product
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2. Which European markets offer opportunities for exporters of persimmons?

Persimmons are relatively new to European consumers

Persimmon consumption is already well developed in the south of Europe, where they may even be common to consumers. For the majority of Northern Europeans, however, persimmons are relatively new. In recent years, a supply increase triggered a gradual transition that saw the persimmon change from having an exotic fruit status to becoming a more common product in supermarkets. As consumers become more familiarized with the fruit, an increasing demand for persimmons is expected.

Spain is the key player

The growth of persimmons in Europe has been largely driven by Spain. Over the past years, Spanish growers have replaced several citrus orchards with persimmons. The Spanish production has surpassed **400,000 tonnes**, according to estimates, which has undoubtedly contributed to the increased consumption all over Europe. Spain supplied Europe with 145 million euros' worth of persimmons in 2017, while imports from non-European suppliers remained below 8 million euros. Spain is therefore the dominant force in the trade of persimmons in Europe.

The strong production growth and the current ban on Russia imports have led Spanish producer to search for new markets outside of Europe over fear of overproduction. Only in 2018, however, production temporarily dropped due to adverse weather.

Countries that have the same growing season as Spain's, such as Israel, have experienced a decrease in their exports to Europe due to price difference and, naturally, overlapping seasons. At the same time, one can expect a growing need to meet off-season demand and ensure year-round availability of persimmons.

Most of the global persimmon production takes place in the northern hemisphere, Spain being the world's principle exporter of persimmons. Supply from the southern hemisphere is still underdeveloped. According to Spanish sources, countries such as South Africa, Peru and Uruguay are just getting started, while Brazil does not even produce sufficient persimmons for its local market. This means the potential for counter-seasonal persimmons is large.

Germany and the United Kingdom import persimmons mostly from developing countries

Spain and Italy are the largest consumer markets for persimmons because of their local production. The countries that offer the most opportunities for exporting persimmons to Europe, however, are France, Germany and the United Kingdom, the latter two in particular because of their higher share of imports from developing countries. France has significant imports of persimmon from Spain, but French imports of persimmon from developing countries have actually decreased in the last three years. The presence of more significant populations of Arabs, Turks and Asians in France, Germany and the UK also contributes to the consumption of persimmons.

Tips:

- Stay up to date with seasonal supply and production volumes. Check the news and [market overviews](#) on platforms such as Freshplaza regularly.

- Compare the opportunities for persimmons with the market developments of other fresh products using the [CBI Market Intelligence Platform](#).
- Visit [Fruit Attraction](#), the principle trade fair for fresh produce in Spain and engage with business contacts in Spain.

3. What trends offer opportunities on the European market for fresh persimmons?

Increasing interest in unique flavours and new experiences

Even though not all European consumers are yet familiar with persimmons, there is a general interest for novelty in fruit varieties that provide a positive consumer experience in relation to taste, convenience and health qualities.

- Taste: Exotic fruits are generally expensive, therefore taste and consumer experience are very important. You must make sure your product arrives in perfect condition and to the right markets.
- Convenience: European consumers want exotic fruit to be ripe at the time of purchase, so the fruit can be eaten immediately afterwards. Your persimmon will be best received when tannin free, without seeds and ready for consumption. At the same time, shelf life is important for retailers too.
- Health: Consumers in Europe are becoming more aware of health issues and paying increasing attention to their diets. Persimmons can be part of a healthy diet because they are high in carotene, as well as vitamins A and C. European consumers tend to respond well to novel varieties of healthy fruits, so the health benefits of persimmons can be one of the main drivers for market success.

Tips:

- Make sure that logistics and the post-harvest process do not affect product taste or quality.
- Try to work with specialised importers of exotic foods. They are familiar with different taste preferences and know which varieties fit your destination market.
- Communicate the health benefits of the fruit to help expand the European market. Be aware of [European Legislation on food](#), which does not allow you to make health claims.

Growing interest in sustainable fruit

Consumption of fresh fruit in Europe is evolving towards products that go through more sustainable production and processing. As environmental and social issues become more important to consumers, different certification schemes now involve, for example, registration and strong reductions of pesticide use or fair employment practices that may even include price guarantees for producers. Certifications that are in line with the [Global Social Compliance Program \(GSCP\)](#) will have a higher chance of being accepted by European retailers.

- Check the [Global Social Compliance Program \(GSCP\)](#) website for more information about social and environmental certification.
- Check out other [trends on fresh fruit and vegetables](#) on the CBI Market Information platform.

4. What are the requirements for fresh persimmons to be allowed on the European market?

The requirements for fresh persimmons are similar to those of other fresh fruit and vegetables. For more information:

Check the Trade Helpdesk's [overview of export and food safety requirements](#) for fresh persimmons (code

08107000) per country.

Check our study on [buyer requirements for fruit and vegetables](#).

5. What are the legal and non-legal requirements for your product?

Minimise pesticide residues

Pesticide residues are a crucial issue for suppliers of fruits and vegetables to Europe. With the aim of avoiding health and environmental risks, the European Union has set maximum residue levels (MRLs) for pesticides in and on food products. Products exceeding these levels are withdrawn from the European market. Expect extra stringency with persimmon varieties that are eaten with skins.

Note that buyers in several countries such as the United Kingdom, Germany, the Netherlands and Austria set stricter MRLs than those specified by the European Union. A growing number of buyers are also working with the concept of [chem free](#), which means that favour products that do not have any traceable residues.

Tips:

- Find which MRLs are relevant for fresh persimmons by consulting the European [MRL database](#). You can search per product or per pesticide. The database lists all MRLs associated with a specific product or pesticide.
- Reduce the use of pesticides by applying [integrated pest management](#) (IPM) in production. IPM is an agricultural pest control strategy that includes growing practices and chemical management.
- Read more about [MRLs on the European Commission website on Food Safety](#). Check with your buyers if they have any additional requirements regarding MRLs and pesticide use.

Comply with phytosanitary requirements

Fruits and vegetables exported to the European Union must comply with European legislation on plant health. The European Commission has established [phytosanitary requirements](#) to prevent the introduction and spread of organisms that may be harmful to plants and plant products in Europe. These requirements are enforced by the competent food safety authorities in the importing and exporting countries.

Tip:

- Verify with the [national plant protection organisation](#) or food safety authority in your country if you can and what are the conditions for you to export fresh persimmons to Europe. These authorities normally work with international standards, but always check with your buyer as well.

Quality

A specific marketing and quality standard for fresh persimmons is available from the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE): [UNECE Standard FFV-63 concerning the marketing and commercial quality control of persimmons](#)

Persimmons can be divided into three classes: Extra Class, Class I and Class II. Europe demands minimum Class I, which requires a persimmon that shows only slight defects that do not affect its general appearance, quality or presentation.

In all classes, persimmons must be:

- intact, with the calyx attached, which may be with or without dry and brown peduncle;
- sound — fruit affected by rotting or deterioration, such as to make it unfit for consumption, is excluded;
- clean, practically free of any visible foreign matter;
- practically free from pests;
- free from damage caused by pests affecting the flesh;
- free of abnormal external moisture;
- free of any foreign smell and taste.

The processing and condition of the persimmons must be such as to enable them to:

- withstand transportation and handling;
- arrive in satisfactory condition at the place of destination;
- continue their ripening process and reach a satisfactory degree of ripeness (at least 1/3 of the fruit should be yellow or the colour of the fruit should be turning).

Size

Uniformity in size for Extra Class and Class I is compulsory. To ensure uniformity in size, the range in size among fruit in the same package shall be:

(a) For persimmons sized by diameter or count: not exceeding 20 mm

(b) For persimmons sized by weight: in accordance with the table below

Fruit weight in grams	Maximum permissible difference among fruit within the same package in grams
50-90	20
85-130	25
125-190	35
180-230	50
>220	70

Source: [UNECE Standard for persimmons](#)

Northern European markets often prefer smaller sizes than Southern Europe.

Tip:

- Maintain high quality standards and supply a superior product to complement the European production. Uniformity in size and quality is important.

Packaging

Packaging requirements differ between customers and market segments. Persimmons must at least be packed in new, clean and good quality packaging to prevent damage and protect the product properly. Persimmons are usually packed single layer in cardboard boxes of two to four kilos with a plastic tray underneath.

Always discuss the packaging requirements with your buyer.

Labelling

Consumer package labelling must be in accordance with the rules and regulations applicable in the European market. Labels may not contain any toxic ink or glue. See also:

- The FAO [Codex General Standard for the Labelling of Pre-Packaged Foods](#)
- The European [Regulation \(EU\) No 1169/2011](#) on the provision of food labelling and information to consumers

Labels or marking for fresh fruit and pre-packed fresh fruit should provide the following information:

- packer, dispatcher or exporter: name and physical address or code mark officially recognised by the national authority;
- product name 'Persimmons' if the contents are not visible from the outside, plus name of the variety;
- country of origin and, optionally, district, region or place;
- commercial specifications, i.e. class and size (minimum and maximum diameter, weight or number of units);
- 'Ready for consumption when firm' or equivalent denomination, where appropriate;
- official control mark (optional).

In addition, the label should include any certification logo, if applicable, and the retailer's logo, in the case of private-label products.

For more information on labelling, packaging and quality, see also the section [Quality](#) above or read about [food labelling in the EU Trade Helpdesk](#).

Which additional requirements do buyers often have?

GLOBALG.A.P. and other certification as guarantee

Since food safety is a top priority in all European food sectors, you can expect most buyers to request extra guarantees, such as certifications for your product.

The most commonly requested certification is [GLOBALG.A.P.](#), a pre-farm gate standard that covers the whole agricultural production process, from before the plant is in the ground to the non-processed product — processing is not covered.

GLOBALG.A.P. may also be required depending on the destination country, market conditions and market channel. For instance, it has become nearly impossible to supply to Northern Europe buyers without having GLOBALG.A.P. certification, since it is a standard requirement of most supermarkets in the region.

Examples of other food safety management systems that can be required are:

- British Retail Consortium ([BRC](#))
- International Food Standard ([IFS](#))
- Food Safety System Certification ([FSS22000](#))
- Safe Quality Food Programme ([SQF](#))

The above management systems are supplemental to GLOBALG.A.P. and are recognised by the [Global Food Safety Initiative \(GFSI\)](#).

Tips:

- Identify the food-safety management systems that are usually requested in your target market. Expect GLOBALG.A.P. to be one of them.
- Read more on the various food-safety management systems at the [Standards Map](#).
- Always remember that food safety is a major issue. Work proactively with buyers to improve food safety, be transparent and remain up to date with regard to [buyer requirements and regulations](#).

The production must be sustainable and socially responsible

There is growing attention in Europe for the social and environmental conditions in producing areas. Most European buyers have a code of conduct which they expect suppliers to adhere to. For fresh persimmons social compliance is important and for most large retailers in Northern Europe, it is a must. Buyers in Eastern Europe can be less demanding but they are expected to follow the rest of Europe in the future.

Implementing [GRASP](#), a standard for social practices, provides you with a good basic social certification. GRASP is part of GLOBALG.A.P. and gaining in importance.

Another good option is implementing standards recognised by the [Sustainability Initiative Fruit and Vegetables \(SIFAV\)](#), such as the [Sedex Members Ethical Trade Audit \(SMETA\)](#). SIFAV consists of an initiative from traders and retailers to become 100% sustainable in sourcing from Latin America, Africa and Asia by 2020.

A few specialised buyers provide extra opportunities for fair-trade certified products. They use certification schemes such as [Fair for Life](#) or [Fairtrade](#). In general, fair-trade certification is losing importance in Europe due to its complexity and costs. Fresh, fair-trade persimmons are not yet on the market.

Tips:

- For more information on buyer initiatives with regards to social compliance, see the [buyer requirements for fresh fruit and vegetables](#) on the CBI marketing intelligence platform.
- Examine your company's current performance, for example, by completing a self-assessment of the Business Social Compliance Initiative on the [amfori/BSCI website](#).
- Consult the [Standards Map database](#) for additional information and to learn about differences between social and environmental labels.

6. What do niche markets require?

Organic is a growing niche market

An increasing number of European consumers prefer food products that are produced and processed using natural methods. The market for organic persimmons is much smaller than the conventional market, but demand is growing and supply is limited.

In order to market organic products in the European Union, you must use organic production methods according to [European legislation](#). Furthermore, you have to use these production methods for at least two years before you can market your fresh persimmons as organic.

Denmark, Sweden, Germany, Switzerland and Austria have the highest shares of organic products in their respective markets. There is growth potential for organic persimmons, although in some of these markets the fruit is still a niche product.

Tips:

- Implementing organic production and becoming certified can be expensive, so assess the market potential before making any investments.
- For the export of organic persimmons to the European market, use a specialised importer who understands the market and has good access to clients that purchase organic fruit. Use, for example, the [Organic-Bio](#) database.

7. What competition will you be facing in the European persimmon market?

Supermarkets' buying power

Persimmons are still considered exotic, but have started to become more regularly sold in larger supermarkets. This means that volumes are increasing and so is buying power. Negotiating on your own terms is therefore expected to become harder as well. In addition, the strict requirements of retailers can be a major hurdle for new market entrants.

When looking for buyers that supply to larger retailers, expect them to select only medium or large suppliers that can offer a reliable supply and that are well organised.

Tips:

- Establish a credible track record including transparent information on your company and product quality. Having stable partnerships and being a trustworthy supplier can help you to establish and maintain your position on the market.
- Make sure you are well prepared for the European market and read the [CBI tips for doing business with European buyers](#).

Counter-season opportunity

Spanish suppliers are your main competitors, although production also exists in Italy and in parts of Eastern Europe. Production has increased significantly in Spain in recent years, as many Spanish producers of citrus have switched to persimmons. Even local varieties have been developed in Spain such as the Rojo Brillante with its own [protected designation of origin](#).

When Spain enters the market in the end of the European summer, persimmons become widely available and market prices drop. The Spanish supply season mostly goes from September to December. Some growers accelerate the ripening process by using ethylene, which allows them to have their fruits on the market as early as August. Selling varieties such as the Sharoni, some producers can remain on the market all the way to February.

For non-European exporters, the best opportunity is in avoiding the Spanish season of persimmons and focusing on supplying in the spring and summer months.

Tips:

- Look for opportunities in the European off-season or in supplying new varieties. Specialists in novelties can have a stronger position for negotiation than suppliers of regular fruit.

- Make sure you stay informed about the production and climate conditions in Spain and use them to your benefit.
- Stay up to date with import requirements and maintain good contact with important buyers to be ready to trade when the European production is low.

Non-European competition is low

Most competition from outside the EU comes from Israel, South Africa and Colombia. Israel produces Sharon fruit, a sweet and high-quality persimmon variety. Israeli exporters, enter the European market directly after Spanish supplies dry up.

In the summer, the availability of persimmons in Europe is minimal and there is little competition in the counter-season supply. This means that the European summer provides the best window of opportunity for producing countries in the southern hemisphere. Most countries that produce citrus fruits have the potential to become persimmon suppliers, such as Brazil, Uruguay, Peru and India.

Table 2: Indicative supply calendar



Product competition

When supplying persimmons during the summer, when availability is generally low, you must consider the competition of other fruits that may be in season. During the summer, European consumers have a broad choice of local seasonal fruit, including stone fruit, soft fruit and melons.

When trying to compete with other fruit, you must make persimmons an attractive option to the consumer. Price and local preferences will have a significant influence in the marketing of persimmons. As a supplier, you can partly influence this by maintaining an attractive price-quality balance.

Tips:

- Match your offer to the preferences concerning size, taste and presentation of your specific market. In Northern Europe, for example, consumers prefer medium-sized persimmons.
- Do not compete on price alone. Build partnerships with buyers and strive for excellent product quality and handling.
- Look on the CBI Market Intelligence platform for more information about [competition in the European market for fresh fruit and vegetables](#).

8. Which trade channels can you use to export fresh persimmons to the European market?

Association with Spanish companies

Spanish growers and companies have a strong position in the cultivation of persimmons. They are the most experienced in Europe and the first to export their production to other European markets and beyond. Some of these companies also invested in production in countries outside the EU to maintain a counter-seasonal supply, such as in Peru and Uruguay.

As a new supplier, it can be interesting to associate yourself with Spanish persimmon companies. This form of cooperation requires you to have your own cultivation of persimmons.

Tip:

- Get acquainted with the Spanish market. Good starting points are for example [kakifruit.com](https://www.kakifruit.com) and the [exhibitor's guide of Fruit Attraction](#).

Supermarket versus specialist retailers

Most persimmons are sold in retail settings, with lower sales through food service channels. It is important to distinguish between the supermarket channel and the specialist retail channel, which includes physical shops and street markets. Supermarkets are dominant in North-western Europe, while specialised retail is more important in Southern Europe.

Tips:

- Only become part of a retail programme if you are able to offer larger volumes and adhere to its high requirements. Relationships with experienced service providers that supply large retailers are highly recommended.
- Check the [Market Channels and Segments](#) available on the CBI market intelligence platform.

Ethnic consumption

Traditional consumers of persimmons are from Asian and Middle Eastern origin. Due to the increasing integration of different ethnic groups in Europe, you can expect persimmons to increase in importance as well.

The United Kingdom has a large Indian community, Germany has a strong concentration of people with Turkish background and France counts with a large population of Arabs. All these ethnic groups have a larger tradition of consuming persimmons than the native population.

When targeting ethnic sales channels, the wholesale market can be an interesting channel to start exploring your opportunities.

Tips:

- Find potential buyers on traditional wholesale markets such as [Rungis](#) in Paris or [Fruchthof](#) in Berlin.
- Find a European importer by presenting yourself at trade fairs such as [Fruit Logistica](#). All of the different channels start with creating a strong relationship with a European partner.
- Read also the CBI tips on how to [find buyers on the European fresh fruit and vegetable market](#).

9. What are the end market prices for fresh persimmons?

Consumer prices for persimmons depend on availability, quality, type of shipment, origin and type of retail outlet. During the Spanish production season, trade prices are generally lower. Retail prices vary between 0.30 and 0.80 euro per piece.

The table below provides information about the indicative consumer prices of persimmons without discounts. These figures are just indications.

Table 3: Indicative retail prices for fresh persimmons



Tips:

- Find information about consumer prices on the online shops or the assortments of supermarket chains such as [Tesco](#), [Rewe](#), [Albert Heijn](#) or [Carrefour](#). Be aware that much of the retail trade is planned in supply programmes and pricing is not linked to trading prices.
- Find wholesale and trade prices by consulting your contacts in Europe or look on websites such as [France Agrimer](#).

Please review our [market information disclaimer](#).