

POLICY BRIEF

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The future of pear in Emilia Romagna

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With over 700 thousand tons produced per year, Italy is by far the largest pear producer in the EU28 holding about 30% of pear production.

The majority of Italian production is concentrated in a limited area of the Po Valley, in the provinces of Modena, Ferrara, Bologna and Ravenna (ISTAT, 2016). The Po Valley has represented an ideal environment of cultivation from the beginning of the 1900s together with the strong traditional know how of local producers.

However, the future of the pear sector is under threat in a number of ways due to export barriers, incoming phytopathogens, environmental concerns, high fragmentation of the supply chain and a decrease in consumption.

This brief has been developed from research conducted as part of the H2020-funded project, SUFISA. It aims to give an overview of an in-depth study carried out on pear sector in Emilia Romagna Region. Further details are available from the main project website: <http://www.sufisa.eu/>. The document provides some key messages that summarize the main issues arisen from the study and potential policy implications.

Key messages

- The Pear sector is facing some challenges related to the reduction of internal consumption. It is important to involve customers by providing information about the unique characteristics of pears, through advertising and a labelling system to increase consumer preferences.
- One of the main issues affecting the pear market highlighted by experts is the extreme fragmentation of the sector that determines a lack of bargaining power of producers along the supply chain, particularly with retailers. This is mainly due to the high number of consortiums existent on the territory.
- Due to the restriction in the use of some chemicals, incoming diseases such as Psylla, Halyomorpha halys, Xylella etc., which undermine production, are



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difficult to keep under control. Moreover, some agrochemical companies do not invest in the discovery of new chemicals.

- Several consequences of climate change have been highlighted: increasing irrigation costs, the simultaneous maturation of several varieties which creates a partial overcapacity on the markets, problems in the regular development of fruits (especially Abate Fétel and White William determined by high temperature changes that characterized the post-affiliation phase of fruits).
- It becomes increasingly strategic to find and consolidate new markets. Italy can export without particular difficulties in markets such as Hong Kong, Canada, United Arab Emirates. Due to the Russian embargo and Chinese phytosanitary barriers, producers have to divert their production to the Far East. Collaboration to promote exports to new markets should be set up by political institutions.
- Innovation within variety is an important strategy to prompt consumption. However, because pear implants have a long rotation, with a high level of initial investment and some unproductive years at the beginning of the implant life, the introduction of new varieties must be carefully evaluated and financed.
- Producers are oriented towards improving the quality of the product. However, together with retailers they face several issues in preserving the proper quality of the pear fruit, which is compromised during several stages of the supply chain: harvesting, storage and transportation.



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