



Quality remains high amid record low Italian olive oil production

The quality of Italian extra virgin olive oil remains high despite reports that 2018 was one of the worst-ever seasons for national production.

Olive oil production in Italy drastically dropped by 57 percent to 185,000 tons last year compared with figures from 2017, according to a report recently published by ISMEA, a Rome-based institute under the supervision of the Italian ministry for agriculture, food and forestry.

The dramatic decrease in volume is the third time in six years that a harvest's negative performance has been caused by adverse weather events, such as frost, as well as related phytosanitary problems that include pest attacks and plant diseases.

The harvest could have been worse if farmers across the country had failed to commit in recent years to adapt to these climatic challenges and commit to protecting the seasonal development of olive trees, thereby ensuring the same high qualitative standard for extra virgin olive oil.

Puglia in south Italy, which usually accounts for half of national production, experienced the biggest drop, with a harvest decrease of two-thirds compared to last year. However, some regions in the north benefited from improved conditions and enjoyed higher than average production levels.

The scarcity of products has been reflected in the market, with the kilo price of Italian extra virgin olive oil 40 percent more expensive than last June. Further afield, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) has already launched a crackdown on olive oil fraud in the wake of the poor harvest. The agency is watching to ensure that imported olive oils are not diluted with cheaper oils, such as peanut oil, which underlines the importance of traceability.

As defined by European Regulations, traceability helps combat fraud by providing documented proof of the geographical origin and identity of a product. Some extra virgin olive oils bear a special traceability code that allows the consumer to trace all stages in the oil production chain, from farming and milling to storage and final packaging.

The international TAICHI project is spreading the word about the concept of traceability and the health benefits of using extra virgin olive oil for cooking to Mainland China and Taiwan.

Co-funded by the EU and promoted by the two main consortia of Italian olive growers, Italia Olivicola and UNAPOL, the TAICHI project offers consumers all the information they need to understand olive oil through its website, various social media platforms and OurOliveOil APP – available in the [App Store](#) and [Google Play](#).

Sources:

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