



International Olive Agreements

Background Note

Millions of families throughout the world, especially in the Mediterranean region, depend on olive crop. In recent years, global olive oil production and consumption amounts to approximately 3 mln. tonnes per year/season.

The first International Olive Oil Agreement (IOOA) dates back to 17 October 1955, when it was adopted after negotiations convened in Geneva by the Secretary-General of the United Nations. The prime aim of the first IOOA was to stimulate the international coordination of production, industrialization and marketing policies in the olive sector and to stabilize and expand trade in olive oil. The International Olive Council (IOC) was established in 1959 to administer provisions of the Agreement, with the secretariat in Madrid, Spain. The first Agreement was followed by three subsequent Agreements of 1963, 1979, and 1986. The 1986 Agreement marked a milestone in the IOC life covering for the first time, not only olive oil but also table olives.

The current International Agreement on Olive Oil and Table Olives, 2005 (TD/OLIVE.OIL.10/6) was negotiated at the UN conference held in Geneva in April 2005 under the auspices of UNCTAD and remains in force until 31 December 2015. Like for its predecessors, the fundamental task of the Agreement is to ensure the development of olive growing and the quality improvement of the products obtained from it, as well as the expansion and increase of world consumption of those products. However, the 2005 Agreement has come a long way from previous ones incorporating new, innovative features to help the IOC to adapt to changing demands of the society to the olive sector. In particular, it places major emphasis on building closer relations with the private sector and bringing industry and institutions together to work out solutions to concerns and issues of the olive sector; attaches even more importance to product quality, a key argument in promoting olive oil and table olives to consumers and in helping to balance supply and demand; puts environmental protection and conservation as top priorities to improve the environmental impact of olive growing and olive and olive oil industry. Membership of the 2005 Agreement includes the leading international producers and exporters of olive oil and table olives and accounts for 98% of world olive production (Albania, Algeria, Argentina, European Union, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Montenegro, Morocco, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey, Uruguay).

The International Olive Council is a decisive player in contributing to the sustainable and responsible development of olive growing. It serves as a world forum for discussing policymaking issues and tackling present and future challenges of the olive economy. It does so by: encouraging international technical cooperation on research and development projects, training and transfer of technology; encouraging the expansion of international trade and consumption, drawing up and updating product trade standards and improving quality; enhancing the environmental impact of olive growing and the olive industry; supplying clear, accurate market information and statistics; enabling government representatives and experts to meet regularly to discuss problems and concerns and to fix priorities for IOC action. For more information on the IOC please consult <http://internationaloliveoil.org>.