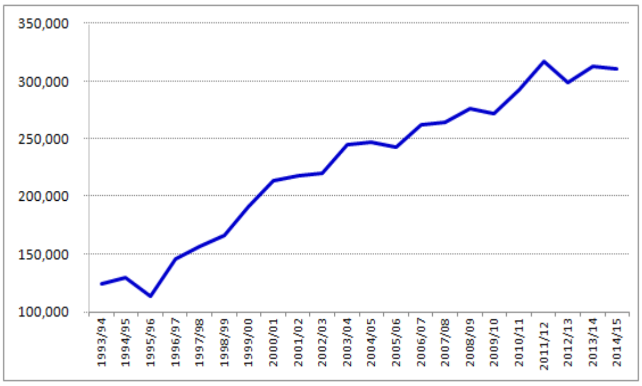
Trends in US olive oil imports: bulk and packaged

Over the last two decades, US imports of olive oil and olive pomace oil have increased almost two and a half times, rising from 125 000 t in 1993/94 to 311 000 t in 2014/15 (Chart 1). In this month's issue we will look at how imports have evolved over time in terms of the grades of olive oil imported and container type.

In 1993/94, product packaged in containers < 18 kg accounted for 88 pc of US imports but by 2014/15 this share was no more than 58.2 pc. Sales of packed oils have therefore lost 29.8 points to bulk oils. Italy was the source of 72 pc of the 125,000 t imported in 1993/94, with imports split between virgin olive oil (22 pc), olive oil (50 pc) and olive pomace oil (1 pc). The remainder came largely from Spain (9 pc), Greece (3 pc) and Turkey (2.5 pc).

In 2014/15, when US imports totalled more than 311 000 t, the trend had reversed and more olive oil was being imported in bulk than in bottles. Since 2000/01 there has also been a move towards quality among US consumers. This is shown by the fact that in 1993/94 virgin olive oil had a 32 pc share of total imports. In 2014/15 this share had expanded to 67 pc (Chart 2).



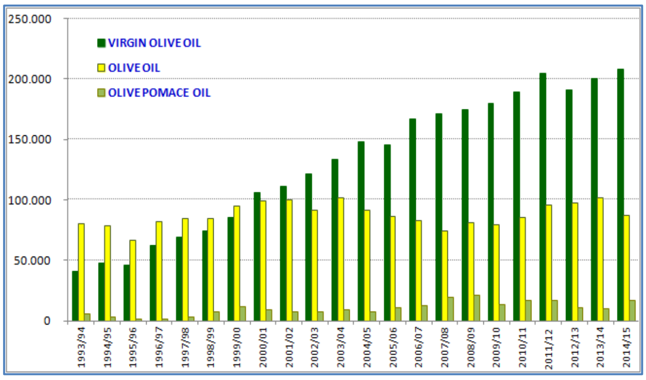


Chart 1 – Trend of US imports of olive oil and olive pomace oil (t)

Chart 2 – Trend of US imports by grade (t)

As mentioned above, 58.2 pc of the oil imported into the United States in 2014/15 was in containers <18 kg and came mostly from Italy (39 pc). Itemised by grade, Italian imports were made up of extra virgin (23 pc), olive oil (10 pc) and organic extra virgin (6 pc), followed by olive pomace oil and other categories. Spain was the second biggest supplier of the United States, accounting for 13.6 pc of its bottled imports. Next were Tunisia (2.0 pc) and Greece (1.7 pc) and other countries. Extra virgin olive oil was the grade in greatest demand for packaged imports.

As can be seen from Chart 3, bulk-container imports have been winning ground from packaged product over the last 20 years. Italy leads the packaged market while Spain dominates the bulk market. In 2014/15, almost 42 pc of the olive imported into the United States was in containers > 18 kg, of which 19 pc was from Spain, followed by Tunisia (13 pc), Morocco (3 pc), Argentina (2 pc), Italy (1.6 pc), Chile (1.5 pc) and the rest of the countries. Virgin olive oil was the most popular grade for imports in this category of container (24 pc of the total, of which 17 pc extra virgin, 5 pc organic extra virgin and 2 pc virgin). Thirteen per cent belonged to the olive oil grade and 4 pc was olive pomace oil. Chart 4 plots the trend of US imports of the two chief categories of product - virgin olive oil (150910) and olive oil (150990) - by container size over the past 20 crop years. Notably, until 2001/02, packaged olive oil was in greatest demand (150990 < 18 kg) but this trend then switched and packaged virgin olive oil (150910 < 18 kg) is now predominant.

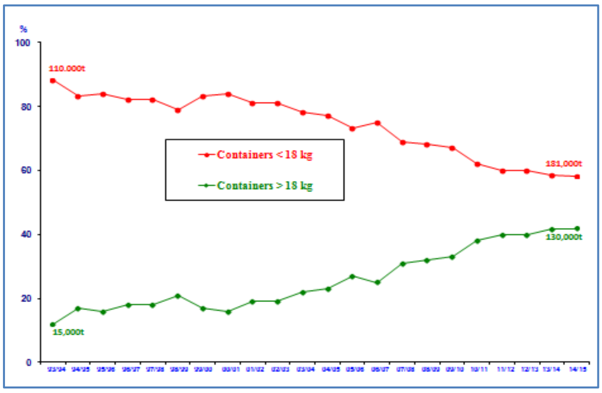


Chart 3 – US olive oil imports by container type (%)

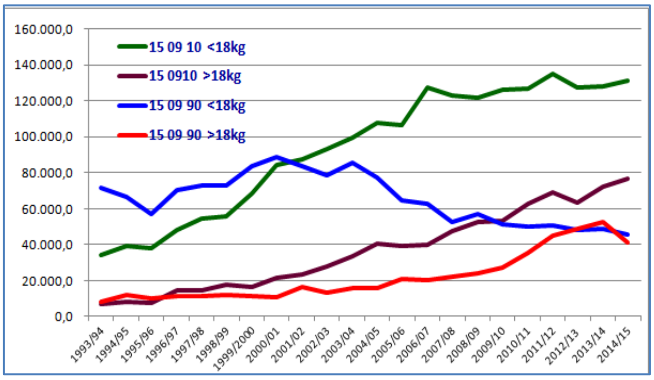


Chart 4 – US olive oil imports (t) by grade and container type

The five-season trend of US imports by country of origin and container size between 2010/11 and 2014/15 is reported in Table 1. The picture that emerges is a 17.9 pc increase in bulk imports, contrasting with a loss in bottled shared (–0.41 pc). The four top suppliers of packaged product by order of volume are Italy, then Spain, Tunisia, Greece and Turkey. In the bulk ranking, Spain is the leader, followed by Tunisia, Morocco, Argentina and Italy. Spain therefore clearly dominates the bulk market and is making inroads in packaged product, which is still led by Italy although it has lost ground in volume terms over the period reviewed.

USA - IMPORTS by CONTAINER & by COUNTRY	<18KG				
	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014	2014/2015
ITALY	**140115.4**	**147674.5**	**138060.3**	**130654.3**	**122383.7**
SPAIN	**28499.8**	**28097.1**	**25305.7**	**36356.4**	**42259.9**
TUNISIA	**4235.3**	**4587.6**	**4325.7**	**4066.1**	**6089.4**
GREECE	**3491.1**	**4134.9**	**4239.4**	**4313.7**	**5197.7**
TURKEY	703.2	1780.5	2966.4	2804.4	1603.0
LEBANON	873.8	803.4	970.3	968.4	1028.6
PORTUGAL	1100.8	1064.8	1058.3	1121.9	991.1
CHILE	644.4	746.0	1074.1	764.7	631.5
ISRAEL	371.9	221.1	313.5	192.4	258.3
MOROCCO	312.0	199.8	80.3	303.6	146.2
ARGENTINA	322.9	604.9	584.7	594.8	109.2
AUSTRALIA	73.0	180.6	41.6	22.4	74.5
MEXICO	161.1	86.9	70.8	12.7	6.0
Others	827.6	621.0	783.3	610.6	289.0
TOTAL	**181732.3**	**190803.1**	**179874.4**	**182786.4**	**181068.1**

USA - IMPORTS by CONTAINER & by COUNTRY	>18KG				
	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014	2014/2015
SPAIN	**37784.9**	**64753.1**	**33644.0**	**88107.5**	**58583.5**
TUNISIA	**21394.4**	**30918.4**	**31193.7**	**11179.2**	**39489.6**
MOROCCO	**27844.2**	**4760.9**	**6890.5**	**3953.0**	**9313.2**
ARGENTINA	**7698.5**	**8483.8**	**4928.0**	**8020.9**	**6368.3**
ITALY	9328.7	7396.1	7304.3	7072.4	4834.1
CHILE	1267.1	3370.5	3018.2	3742.6	4512.1
GREECE	840.2	1395.9	3252.3	1205.6	2256.7
TURKEY	355.3	1371.6	25762.6	3896.7	1941.2
AUSTRALIA	1830.6	1804.3	175.9	918.1	877.9
PORTUGAL	789.1	809.8	204.9	130.6	114.7
LEBANON	25.1	38.7	863.5	262.4	42.7
ISRAEL	119.4	38.9	36.7	12.4	40.0
MEXICO	42.0	272.4	482.7	402.5	37.3
Others	996.8	877.7	1195.8	650.7	1694.6
TOTAL	**110316.3**	**126292.1**	**118953.1**	**129554.6**	**130105.9**

Table 1 – Five-season trend (2010/11–2014/15) of US imports by country of origin and container type

WORLD TRADE IN OLIVE OIL AND TABLE OLIVES

1. WORLD TRADE IN OLIVE OIL

- **Close of the 2014/15 crop year**

At the close of the 2014/15 crop year, which ran from October 2014 until September 2015, sales of olive oil [olive oils (customs heading 15.09) and olive pomace oils (15.10)] showed a season-on-season increase for Japan (+10 pc), where heavy import growth began in March 2015, steady levels in the United States and China and decreases in Russia (-33 pc), Australia (–21 pc), Brazil (-8 pc) and Canada (–7 pc).

At the season end, intra-EU acquisitions were down by 3 pc on the previous crop year whereas extra-EU imports showed a steep 293 pc rise. This situation was prompted by the heavy drop in production in Spain and Italy in 2014/15, which obliged these countries to look for supplies elsewhere, especially in Tunisia. As a result, Spanish imports from Tunisia soared by 1071 pc and Italian imports by 330 pc. As reported in the previous issue of this newsletter, this upward movement in imports from Tunisia began in December 2014 and stemmed from its record harvest in 2014/15, which positioned it as the world's top exporter that season.

Olive oil imports (including olive-pomace oils) (t)

No	Importing country	October 13	October 14	November 13	November 14	December 13	December 14	January 14	January 15
1	Australia	2169.9	3125.1	2461.2	2391.8	2004.0	1652.1	2211.3	1856.8
2	Brazil	9075.3	9584.6	6239.6	7269.9	7156.7	6249.3	5163.6	6367.2
3	Canada	4014.7	3985.0	2845.6	3257.6	2662.2	3069.3	3649.0	2341.2
4	China	2609.4	2410.8	3030.7	3651.5	4007.6	3530.5	3268.3	2850.1
5	Japan	4410.0	4776.0	4386.0	4735.0	3967.0	3965.4	4271.0	4531.1
6	Russia	2982.0	4259.5	2763.7	3192.4	3174.3	2653.1	1914.2	1513.0
7	USA	23274.0	23332.0	27163.1	28449.8	21455.9	18755.6	26704.8	24296.3
8	Extra-EU/27	14233.0	6722.0	6659.0	6801.8	5141.0	14707.0	6711.3	18871.7
	Intra-EU/27	88710.0	89729.0	75558.0	98016.0	98320.0	122803.0	93392.2	101262.0
	Total	**151478.3**	**147924.0**	**131106.9**	**157765.8**	**147888.7**	**177385.2**	**147285.7**	**163889.4**

No	Importing country	February 14	February 15	March 14	March 15	April 14	April 15	May 14	May 15
1	Australia	2022.2	1607.8	2946.1	1790.2	2703.3	1727.6	2104.3	1721.5
2	Brazil	5215.4	5517.4	6746.9	6662.1	5281.0	4769.3	5110.2	2781.4
3	Canada	2785.6	3008.9	3955.1	2873.2	5650.3	4118.7	3866.0	4229.0
4	China	1050.3	1471.1	2323.1	2503.5	2532.7	2835.5	2954.8	2534.2
5	Japan	4039.0	3474.0	4840.0	6753.0	5634.0	6319.0	5394.0	6550.0
6	Russia	2641.5	1216.5	3256.9	1589.2	3350.6	1163.6	2655.7	1126.1
7	USA	17979.9	27443.4	29814.3	27063.3	37422.5	31125.9	23534.5	25085.9
8	Extra-EU/27	2110.4	22619.4	3849.5	26731.0	3741.0	32426.3	2090.7	28187.5
	Intra-EU/27	107591.3	106374.0	98077.7	105097.7	96205.0	88340.2	103856.8	93655.1
	Total	**145435.6**	**172732.5**	**155809.6**	**181063.2**	**162520.4**	**172826.1**	**151567.0**	**165870.7**

No	Importing country	June 14	June 15	July 14	July 15	August 14	August15	September 14	September 15
1	Australia	2002.0	1646.9	3558.0	1881.9	2471.5	1883.4	2231.8	1537.8
2	Brazil	5158.0	3971.6	6416.0	4613.7	5759.2	5267.2	6060.0	4594.9
3	Canada	4810.3	3353.7	2700.1	3368.0	2683.8	2395.3	2352.0	2934.9
4	China	4032.4	4139.4	4367.1	4161.0	3387.3	3361.2	2327.3	2449.8
5	Japan	3961.0	4603.0	5574.0	5129.0	4163.0	5474.0	5578.0	5595.0
6	Russia	3034.5	1612.2	2807.1	1882.4	2927.7	1485.4	3305.7	1656.3
7	USA	28791.5	31444.9	30075.8	28484.5	20486.0	23631.4	25852.0	22061.0
8	Extra-EU/27	2611.7	25734.0	4987.3	23316.0	3496.8	22293.1	5982.2	nd
	Intra-EU/27	97045.0	82117.0	115649.5	84179.0	96039.7	76516.2	86722.8	nd
	Total	**151446.4**	**158622.7**	**176134.9**	**157015.5**	**141415.0**	**142307.2**	**140411.8**	

- **Start of the 2015/16 crop year**

The new 2015/16 crop year opened with lower trading in olive oil and olive pomace oil in most of the eight markets listed below. In the first two months of the crop year (October and November 2015), the only exception was China where imports were up by 4 pc. The other markets showed large decreases of 38 pc in Brazil, 36 pc in Australia, 18 pc in Canada, 13 pc in Japan and 6 pc in the United States. Trade data for Russia were only available for the month of October and show a decrease of 58 pc compared with the same month of the previous season. This situation calls for close monitoring to check whether these negative results are merely one-off decreases or whether they are indicative of a trend. Preliminary analysis suggests that they may be due to various factors such as the repercussions of prices in the previous crop year, strategic purchasing by importers and the fact that new season oil was not yet ready for export. Whatever the case, it will be necessary to keep close tabs on the figures in the coming months.

The October 2015 figures for EU trade[1] reveal a decrease of 27 pc in intra-EU acquisitions but an increase of 161 pc in extra-EU exports versus the same period of 2014/15.

Olive oil imports (including olive-pomace oils) (t)

No	Importing country	October 14	October 15	November 14	November 15
1	Australia	3125.1	1717.8	2391.8	1818.9
2	Brazil	9584.6	5529.5	7269.9	4853.6
3	Canada	3985.0	3092.5	3257.6	2875.6
4	China	2410.8	3106.7	3651.5	3219.6
5	Japan	4776.0	4492.0	4735.0	3791.0
6	Russia	4259.5	1785.8	3192.4	nd
7	USA	23332.0	28580.0	28449.8	20324.3
8	Extra-EU/27	6722.0	17568.3	6801.8	nd
	Intra-EU/27	89729.0	65353.5	98016.0	nd
	Total	**147924.0**	**131226.1**	**157765.8**	**36883.0**

2. WORLD TRADE IN TABLE OLIVES

- **Close of the 2014/15 crop year**

According to the figures for trade in table olives at the close of the 2014/15 crop year (October 2014–September 2015), imports were 12 pc higher in the United States, unchanged in Canada and down in Russia (–16 pc), Australia (–12 pc) and Brazil (–9 pc).

Extra-EU imports were 2 pc down while intra-EU acquisitions were 8 pc up on the season before.

[1] EU data for November were not available at the time of writing

Table Olive Imports (t)

No	Importing country	October 13	October 14	November 13	November 14	December 13	December 14	January 14	January 15
1	Australia	1511.0	1547.0	1657.0	1234.0	1905.0	1580.0	1740.0	1409.0
2	Brazil	11769.2	12930.3	11299.5	10285.5	8721.4	8685.1	6171.8	8007.7
3	Canada	2795.0	2413.0	2656.0	2469.0	2074.0	2810.0	2622.0	2144.0
4	Russia	8882.2	11076.5	9073.0	8719.1	5026.1	7288.0	4861.8	3413.8
5	USA	11434.0	10367.0	10396.0	10164.0	10937.0	12219.0	10483.0	11629.0
6	Extra-EU/27	6204.0	8283.2	5459.0	7032.3	6404.0	8053.5	7154.4	7778.9
	Intra-EU/27	27012.0	27945.4	25216.0	23889.4	23898.0	27859.4	19431.0	19872.0
	Total	**69607.4**	**74562.4**	**65756.5**	**63793.3**	**58965.5**	**68495.0**	**52464.0**	**54254.4**

No	Importing country	February 14	February 15	March 14	March 15	April 14	April 15	May 14	May 15
1	Australia	1431.0	1064.0	1640.0	1418.0	1408.0	1365.0	1437.0	1316.0
2	Brazil	6273.1	6715.2	7564.4	9256.8	9458.1	8610.0	9928.2	9197.6
3	Canada	2308.0	2390.0	2210.0	1890.0	2620.0	2704.0	2558.0	2721.0
4	Russia	4713.8	2313.8	6308.1	3292.9	5709.6	3564.1	4924.2	2856.5
5	USA	9452.0	10732.0	10932.0	16677.0	11764.0	13795.0	10722.0	14616.0
6	Extra-EU/27	7134.0	6884.8	9755.0	9319.3	9138.0	8813.4	9239.0	7204.6
	Intra-EU/27	20767.8	21643.7	21646.0	24769.9	22340.5	22863.4	23028.8	24928.1
	Total	**52079.7**	**51743.5**	**60055.5**	**66623.9**	**62438.2**	**61714.9**	**61837.2**	**62839.8**

No	Importing country	June 14	June15	July 14	July15	August 14	August 15	September 14	September 15
1	Australia	1195.0	1154.0	1440.0	1405.0	1128.0	975.0	1421.0	1376.0
2	Brazil	9644.0	8558.6	11386.0	6822.6	9981.0	6790.3	11800.0	7394.7
3	Canada	2384.0	2500.0	2755.0	2567.0	1781.0	2342.0	2378.0	2186.0
4	Russia	4688.3	4034.7	5430.0	3614.0	6269.3	4804.4	6695.5	6245.1
5	USA	12165.0	11579.0	14505.0	15387.0	13194.0	12520.0	9598.0	12256.0
6	Extra-EU/27	9457.0	8031.0	9069.0	8364.0	5804.0	5763.0	8181.0	5958.7
	Intra-EU/27	25163.3	29340.3	29218.3	29732.6	19366.7	22256.0	22019.0	25962.9
	Total	**64696.6**	**65197.6**	**73803.3**	**67892.2**	**57524.0**	**55450.7**	**62092.5**	**61379.4**

- **Start of the 2015/16 crop year**

In October and November 2015, the first two months of the 2015/16 crop year, table olive imports behaved differently in the six markets reported below, showing increases in the United States (+19 pc) and Canada (+17 pc) and decreases in Brazil (−26 pc) and Australia (−6 pc). Only October 2015 data were available for Russia and showed a decrease of 39 pc on the same month of the previous season.

The EU[2] trade data for the first month of the season (October 2015) report an increase of 6 pc in intra-EU acquisitions and a decrease of 23 pc in extra-EU imports compared with the same period a year earlier.

Table Olive Imports (t)

No	Importing country	October 14	October 15	November 14	November 15
1	Australia	1547.0	1156.0	1234.0	1469.0
2	Brazil	12930.3	7793.4	10285.5	9311.3
3	Canada	2413.0	2636.0	2469.0	3090.0
4	Russia	11076.5	6730.3	8719.1	nd
5	USA	10367.0	12738.0	10164.0	11635.0
6	Extra-EU/27	8283.2	6397.0	7032.3	nd
	Intra-EU/27	27945.4	29740.9	23889.4	nd
	Total	**74562.4**	**67191.6**	**63793.3**	

II. PRODUCER PRICES

Graph 1 tracks the weekly movements in the prices paid to producers for extra virgin olive oil in the three top EU producing countries plus Tunisia while Graph 3 shows the weekly changes in the producer prices for refined olive oil in the three main EU producers. The monthly price movements for the same two grades of oil are given in Graphs 2 and 4.

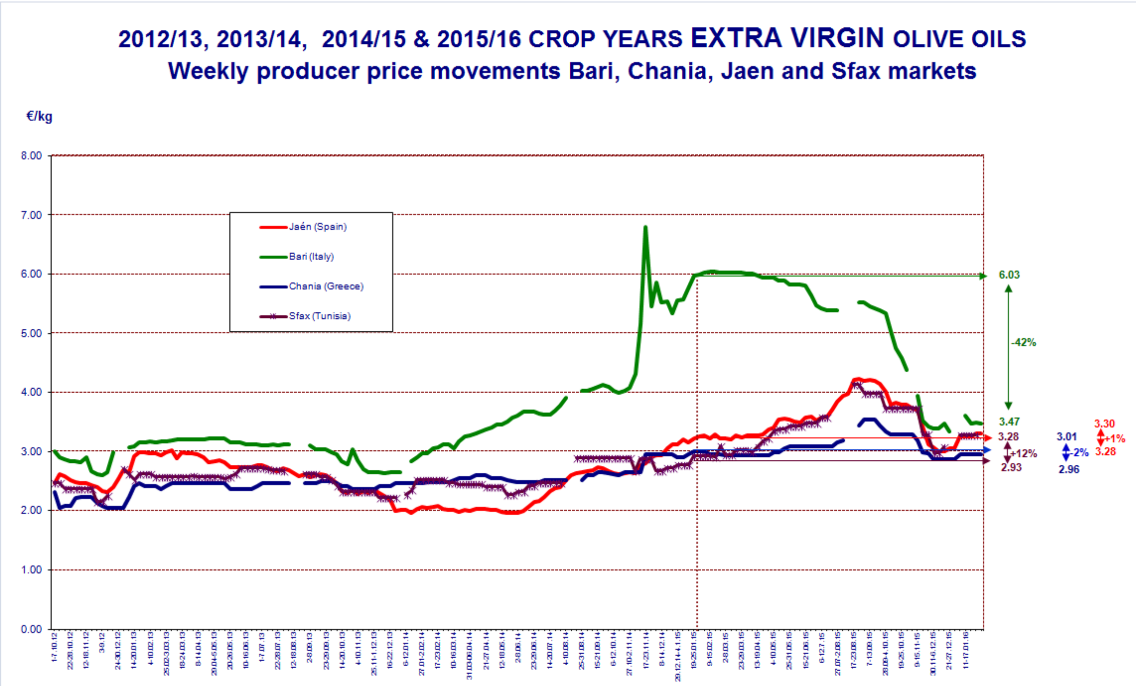
Extra virgin olive oil: Producer prices in **Spain** started to rise in November 2014. After peaking at €4.23/kg in the third week of August 2015, they switched direction and began to drop, gathering momentum from the last week of September (Graph 1). This downward movement started later in Spain than in Italy. In recent weeks prices started to rally and were lying at **€3.30/kg** by the **last week of January 2016**. This is 1 pc higher than a year earlier and 68 pc higher than the low recorded in the third week of May 2014 (€1.96/kg), but 22 pc below the maximum (€4.23/kg).

Italy: In the **week from 10 to 16 November 2014**, producer prices in Italy hit their highest level since the last decade, reaching **€6.79/kg**. After some fluctuations, they started to fall sharply, only to pick up to **€3.47/kg by the end of January 2016**, although this level was still 42 pc lower than a year earlier. Graph 2 shows how the monthly prices of extra virgin olive oil have behaved in recent crop years.

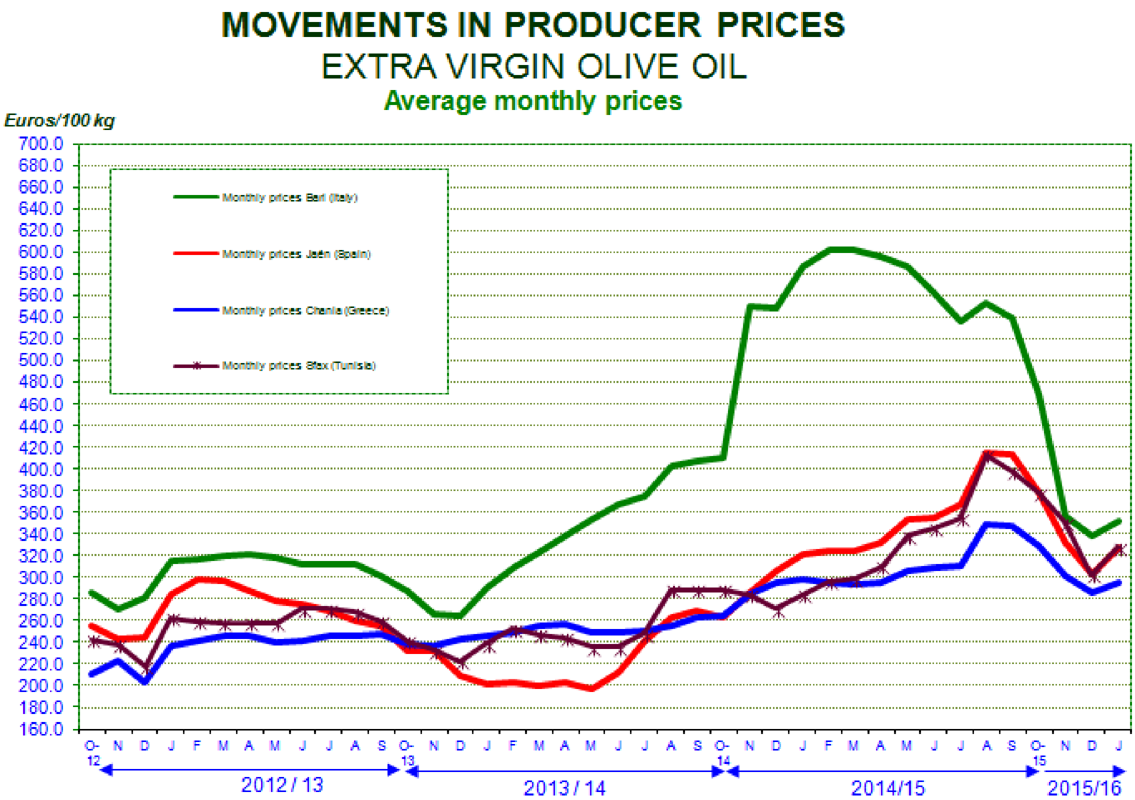
Greece: In the last weeks of August and first week of September 2015, prices rose to period highs (€3.54/kg). After holding steady for a while, they dipped only to level off later at **€2.96/kg** at the **close of January 2016**, 2 pc down on the same period a season earlier.

Tunisia: Producer prices peaked in the last weeks of August 2015 (€4.13/kg). Then, like elsewhere, they started to drop, but later switched back upwards. At the **end of January 2016**, they were lying at **€3.28/kg**, showing period-on-period growth of +12 pc.

[2] The EU data for November were not available at the time of writing.



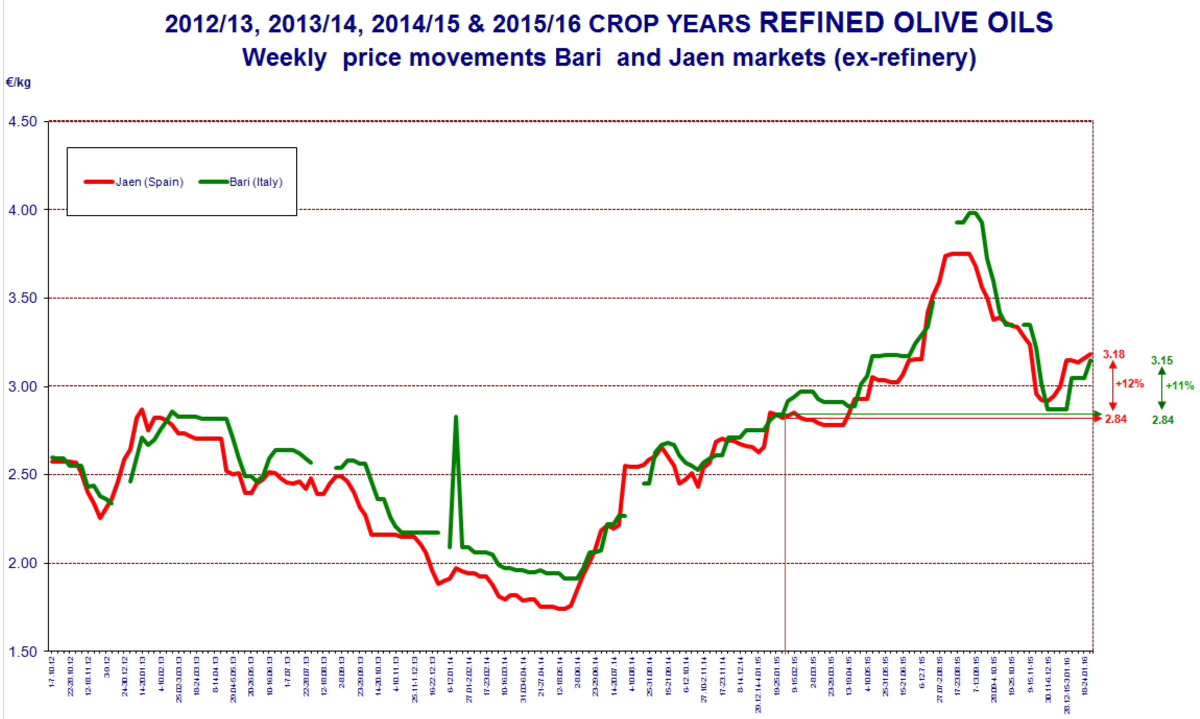
Graph 1



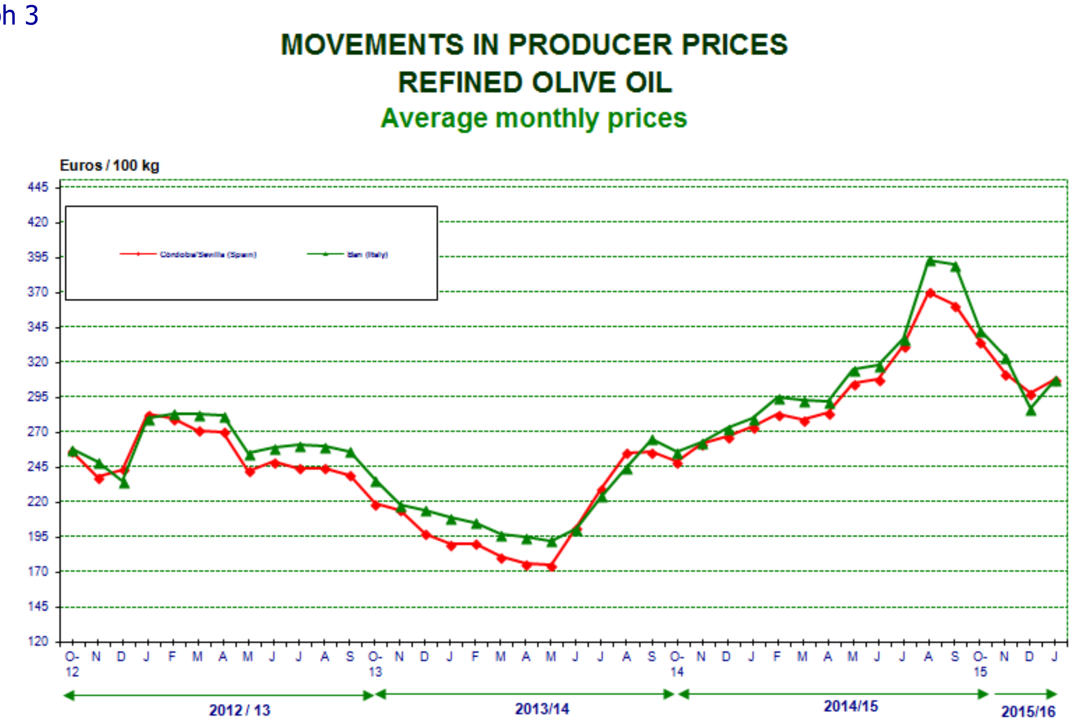
Graph 2

- **Refined olive oil**: After peaking in August 2015, producer prices for refined olive oil followed in the footsteps of extra virgin prices. In **Spain** where they started to drop ahead of elsewhere, they fell sharply but started to rally in recent weeks to stand at **€3.18/kg** in late January 2016, showing an increase of 12 pc on the same period of the preceding crop year. The trend in **Italy** has been similar, with prices lying at **€3.15/kg** at the end of January 2016. This level was 11 pc higher than the same period the season before. No price data are available for this product category in Greece.

At the end of January 2016, the price of refined olive oil (€3.18/kg) and extra virgin olive oil (€3.30/kg) differed by €0.12/kg in Spain whereas in Italy the gap between the two categories was wider (€0.29/kg - Graph 3).



Graph 3



Graph 4

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