



Geographical Indication Product Database - Step 1 -

SOURCE :

Author :

Chaussod R.

Institution : INRA

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Argan oil from Morocco

DESCRIPTION :

1. NAME OF PRODUCT : Argan oil

2. COUNTRY AND REGION IN THE COUNTRY: Morocco – south-western provinces.

3. TYPE OF PRODUCT : (including the possible substitutes and imitations of the product)

Argan oil is a vegetable oil obtained from the seeds of the Argan tree (Sapotaceae), a wild tree endemic to south-western Morocco.

4. DESCRIPTION OF THE PRODUCT AND ITS AREA (including its specific characteristics, conditions of production, main differences with the substitutes) :

Argan oil is a typical product from Morocco, very famous even in foreign countries for its original flavour (hazel taste), its pleasant colour (amber gold) and its favourable health effects (from skin to cardiovascular diseases). Indeed, this oil is rich in essential fatty acids, vitamin E and antioxidants. The production area is restricted to the argan forests, spreading on 800.000 ha in arid and semi-arid areas near Agadir. In this area, the inhabitants have extensive user rights on all the products of the argan tree, argan oil being the most valuable product of this multiple-purpose tree. A moroccan standard (N.M. 08.5.090) was recently published by the government to specify the composition of virgin argan oil. A “Geographical Indication Product” is in preparation.

5. LINK WITH THE GEOGRAPHICAL AREA (tradition, know how, reputation, soil, climate, etc.):

Traditionally, argan oil was produced exclusively by women living in the argan forest. All the process was made by hand and required both skilfulness and time (20 hours of work to extract 1 liter of oil from 100 kg of argan fruits). Today, the argan nuts are still broken by hand, between two stones, to release the small oily kernels. This “know-how” is very important and cannot be mechanized. Oil is then extracted either by hand (at the family level) or by electric presses (by local cooperatives or by small private companies).

6. PRODUCTION SYSTEM / SUPPLY CHAIN (some data about the number of producers, processors, market structure..) :

Only people living in the argan forest are allowed to harvest the argan fruits. Traditionally, it was for their own oil production. However, these “argan users” often now sell a part of their harvest, either as dried fruits (to cooperatives, gathering women knowing how to break the nuts) or as kernels (to small factories). Due to an increasing demand of argan oil for domestic and foreign markets, the price of the fruits is raising year after year.

7. MARKET AND REPUTATION (size, price premium, attractiveness, growth) :

Argan oil production is only 4000 tons/year and is inherently restricted to the limited number of the wild argan trees. In Morocco, the market price of argan oil is at least 4 times higher than that of olive oil. For the consumers, the price of argan oil is justified by its reputation of luxury product, based on the huge work needed to produce it and on its intrinsic gastronomic value and potential health effects. The advertising for cosmetic uses of argan oil (for hair and skin care) also greatly contributed to the reputation of this product, all over the world.

8. APPLICANT / HOLDER (IF ANY) :

RELEVANCE : Why is this case important for research in general and for SINER-GI in particular ?

Argan oil is changing from a “local” market (mainly restricted to the production area, 10 years ago) to an international one. The challenge is a fair sharing of the gains, with a substantial increase of the income of the poor people living in the argan forest. It is also expected (desirable) that a better valorisation of such a local product could lead to a better protection of the argan forest by the inhabitants (sustainable development).

CATEGORY :

☒ Origin Product

☐ GI product

☐ Recognized GI



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