

Tomato processing in Egypt

An average of 7.5 million tonnes of tomatoes are harvested annually in Egypt but 99% of this volume is sold on the fresh market. The volume processed is growing rapidly and it is estimated that around 150 000 tonnes were processed in 2009, up from only 40 000 tonnes in 2007.

A total of 200 000 hectares are planted annually. Tomatoes can be grown virtually all year round in the different regions, with ideal conditions, very little virus infection and the availability of new irrigated land. Harvesting typically runs:

- From June 15th to August 31st in the North (Noubaria);
- from September 15th to end of December in Middle Egypt;
- from December 15th to April 1st (Luxor region) and May 1st (Aswan region) in Upper Egypt.



The Egyptian industry is keen to take advantage of its good agronomic conditions, low labor costs, zero tariffs for exports into Europe and proximity to major markets to develop. There have been recent investment and processing capacity quadrupled in 2009 to reach 4 000 tonnes/day, there are over major investments planned notably in Upper Egypt where supplies exceed 160 days. Currently, the processing time is 70 to 110 days but there is a goal to reach 250 days.

The sector is experiencing rapid growth also through the development of the agricultural sector with the implementation of Good Agricultural Practices, introducing new varieties that provide increased yields, higher TSS (Total Soluble Solids) and that are disease resistant, improved seeding nursery operations, reduced agro-chemical use and mechanization. It is assisted in this by the Horticulture Export Improvement Association (HEIA) which also assists growers in marketing, policy advocacy, training and management assistance with the aim of increasing exports.

The sector still immature and the majority of farmers still growing fresh tomato. Therefore, it is still difficult to obtain reliable data that differentiates between fresh and processed tomato sub-sectors. The latest sector data available from the Ministry of Agriculture & Land Reclamation (MOALR) are as follows for 2009-2010:

		Area	Production MT	Yield MT/Acre	% of total vegetables
Fresh Tomato					
Summer	New land	129,850	1,856,852	14.30	21.76
	Old land	138,142	2,083,286	15.08	17.90
Winter/Nili	New land	40,242	577,491	14.35	29.85
	Old land	162,838	2,976,154	18.28	31.76
Processing Tomato					
Summer	New land	3,000	90,000	30.00	
	Old land	0	0	0.00	
Winter/Nili	New land	2,500	75,000	30.00	
	Old land	0	0	0.00	

There are 17 main tomato processors manufacturing tomato paste, ketchup, pasta sauces for the domestic and export markets. Three new companies are in the process of being set-up.

The Egyptian tomato processing industry is represented by the Chamber of Food Industries (CFI) within AMITOM. CFI is a non-profit organization established in 1958 and is the official representative of the Food & Beverages industries in Egypt.