

Tomato processing in Tunisia

With an average of 618 000 tonnes of tomatoes processed over the last five years, Tunisia is the biggest producer in Africa and a major producer in the Mediterranean Basin. It contributed 5.6% to the total 2005/06 production in the AMITOM countries.



Tomato processing is a long time activity in Tunisia with the first factory created since 1903. The number of processing plants knew a significant growth with some 31 canning factories created before the eighties and 42 ones by the nineties.

Nowadays, 34 factories compound the Tunisian tomato processing industry. The total daily processing capacity reached 32,000 T in 2004, from 13,000 T by the 1980s. More than half the companies have joined a governmental program to modernize the factories.

The processed quantities have more than doubled during the last decade, from 300,000 T of fresh tomatoes in 1993 to more than 600,000 T in 2003. The processed volume reached a record 743,000T in 2004.

The main activity was developed around producing tomato paste in consumer packs mainly to satisfy a high local demand of this item. Tunisia is in fact the world's biggest consumer of tomato paste per capita.

Processing tomato production is mainly based in five major regions:

- Cap-Bon area, in the North-East, which represents 60% of total production;
- Sidi-Bouزيد, in central Tunisia, the second largest region with 10% of the production;
- Bejâ region, also in the North East;
- Mannouba Gouvernorat near Tunis;
- Siliana region, characterised by its late harvest.

The tomato farming engages close to 10,000 growers for a total cultivated surface of some 17,000 hectares. The production average yields grew from 26 T/ha in 1995 to 45 T/ha now thanks to the generalisation of drip irrigation. The season generally lasts between early July and mid August, with a 20 days peak from mid-July. The average price of raw tomatoes over the last three seasons was 95 dinars per tonne (72 USD at 2005 value).

Tunisia exports roughly 20-25 thousand tons of tomato concentrate to its neighbouring countries as well as Europe.

GICA (Union of Food Canning Industries), an inter-professional public economy utility agency, represents Tunisia within AMITOM. Created in July 1965, this organisation

federates everyone involved with the canning industry: growers, processors and exporters.

GICA notably has the following missions and tasks:

- to contribute to linking together the different phases by which transit the products;
- to assist professionals in incorporating the latest scientific and technological evolutions in their farms or factories in order to increase, improve and diversify production;
- to contribute, in co-operation with other organisations, to the improvement of the quality and the promotion of processing, packing and export;
- to facilitate dialogue between the administration and professionals, in order for them to work together to fulfil their missions and attain their assigned targets;
- to carry out strategic studies in the sectors of fruits, vegetables and fish canning.

GICA is the organiser of the 7th World Processing Tomato Congress in June 2006.

Year	Total Tomato Production (1000 tonnes)	Processing tomato production (1000 tonnes)	Evolution of the processed volume (index 100 in 1978)	Evolution of the processed volume (in % Amitom)	Evolution of the price of fresh tomatoes (US\$/100Kg farm gate)
1978/79	280	132	100,00%	2,40%	
1979/80	280	150	114,00%	2,20%	
1980/81	280	162	123,00%	2,40%	
1981/82	380	223	169,00%	3,40%	
1982/83	260	114	86,00%	1,70%	
1983/84	360	219	166,00%	2,70%	
1984/85	430	313	237,00%	2,90%	
1985/86	420	300	227,00%	3,40%	
1986/87	420	287	217,00%	4,70%	
1987/88	485	267	278,00%	5,80%	7,00
1988/89	400	266	202,00%	3,80%	7,40
1989/90	450	337	255,00%	3,70%	7,90
1990/91	530	390	295,00%	4,40%	8,25
1991/92	580	470	356,00%	5,70%	7,57
1992/93	550	426	323,00%	5,80%	7,91
1993/94	420	280	212,00%	3,70%	6,97
1994/95	480	320	242,00%	3,60%	8,90
1995/96	580	435	330,00%	4,60%	11,63
1996/97	700	563	427,00%	5,40%	9,31
1997/98	500	362	274,00%	4,20%	7,82
1998/99	663	467	354,00%	4,30%	8,31
1999/2000	930	730	553,00%	5,90%	7,69
2000/01	930	732	553,00%	6,65%	7,01
2001/02	750	430	326,00%	4,30%	6,67
2002/03	907	560	424,00%	5,44%	7,00
2003/04	992	620	470,00%	5,04%	7,80
2004/05	1118	743	563,00%	5,00%	7,80
2005/06	920	735	556,82%	5,60%	7,20