

Exporting dried mung beans to Europe

Mung beans are a traditional ethnic ingredient in the cuisines of various Asian countries, which have become popular among European consumers. Asian cuisines and newly developed products are important for the future sales of dry mung beans. That said, you will find most opportunities in the European sprouting business, on which food safety regulation has recently been sharpened. You must comply with excellent traceability and microbiological control before you can supply this market.

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1. Product description

The mung bean or moong bean (*Vigna radiata*) is a green coloured bean and a light yellow inside. Other colours such as brown or purple are also found.

Mung beans are mainly cultivated in India, China, and Southeast Asia. In the same region it is extensively used as an ingredient in both savoury and sweet dishes. Whole beans, hulled, paste or flour are used in the preparation of meals, soups, pancakes, noodles, desserts, beverages, ice cream and as filling for pastry and dumplings. In Europe mung beans are often sprouted for consumption.

Mung beans are traded under the same statistical code as urad beans (*Vigna mungo*). Urad beans are similar beans that had long belonged to the same species as mung beans. Mung beans are also known as green grams, and urad beans as black grams.

If you are looking for other dry beans, see our [study about exporting dry beans to Europe](#).

Table 1: Combined Nomenclature (CN) Code for dry mung beans

Statistical Number	Product
0713310	Mung beans; Beans of the species <i>Vigna mungo</i> (L.) Hepper or <i>Vigna radiata</i> (L.) Wilczek

Source: Eurostat (Comext)

2. What makes Europe an interesting market for exporters of mung beans?

The European market for mung beans is gradually increasing

The world's supply of mung beans has grown much faster than Europe's import volumes in the past two

decades. But, since 2014, Europe has been showing an upward trend, having increased its imports of mung beans gradually from 21,000 tonnes in 2013 to 27,000 tonnes in 2017.

Suppliers from developing countries such as Myanmar, India and Argentina are the main sources of this import growth in Europe. Imports from China, as well as from developed countries, have been decreasing.

Tip:

Make sure you can offer a consistent quality and volume. This is absolutely necessary if you want to compete with established (bulk) suppliers.

Ethnic consumption in the United Kingdom

The United Kingdom imports most of the mung beans in Europe. The influence of a large Indian population contributes to being the largest importer. The Indian cuisine has become integrated in British food culture. This cuisine indirectly increased the demand for traditional ethnic ingredients such as mung beans.

Bean sprouts in Northern Europe

In Europe mung beans are the most commonly used bean for sprouting (bean sprouts). A large part of their import is destined for sprouting. Germany, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands are popular markets for bean sprouts. Figure 2 shows that these countries are also the main importing countries for dry mung beans.

Germany shows the strongest growth, which is a likely consequence of the increasing attention to health food. But unlike the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, which import principally from Myanmar, Germany receives most mung beans from Italy.

The market of sprouting companies is easy to overlook. However, there are [approximately 120 companies that sprout beans](#). A few of these are of significant size. For more information on sprouting companies, see the market segments below.

Tip:

Start by exploring Northern Europe. Here most of the mung beans enter Europe, either as ethnic ingredient or for sprouting purposes.

International Year of Pulses promotes consumption

The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) made 2016 the [International Year of Pulses](#). The goal of the International Year of Pulses was to help develop worldwide consumption of pulses through increased publicity, the promotion of health benefits and product innovation. The effect of this publicity on the global consumption is not (yet) clear. However, the online campaign can still be a positive influence in the following years.

The promotion of pulses by well-known brands as well as local restaurants and retail chains, will give attention to all the dry beans that are available on the market. The Year of the Pulses can be a good opportunity for you

as exporter to promote your mung beans.

3. What trends offer opportunities on the European market for mung beans?

Beans popular as a vegetarian and health food

A growing number of consumers in Europe are increasingly aware of the need for a healthy diet. Online media and food specialists promote the benefits of health foods. Health foods are foods claimed to have outstanding health characteristics.

Mung beans are ideal for people that look for a healthy diet, as well as for people with dietary needs. Mung beans are, for example, interesting for people with diabetes and vegetarian diets. The health characteristics of mung beans are promoted by websites such as [GreenMungBeans.com](https://www.greenmungbeans.com) and [Healthline](https://www.healthline.com).

In the health segment your main point of attention as an exporter is supplying a clean and pesticide free product.

Tip:

Make sure your product lives up to the expectations of a healthy product, meaning it has to be clean and not contaminated in any way. In agricultural production use for example [Integrated Pest Management](#) (IPM) and alternative cultivation techniques for your crops.

Organic is a growing niche

Increased attention amongst European consumers for health, environmental and social responsibility is leading to rapid growth of the organic sector. Mung beans are also available as organic product.

For exporters of organic mung beans Europe can offer opportunities, because often supplies are not sufficient for the growing demand. Germany is one of the countries that show significant growth in organic food and is an important market for mung beans.

You have to realize the market size for organic mung beans is rather small and buyer requirements are much stricter for organic mung beans (see below).

Tips:

Check our study about the [trends on the European grains and pulses market](#) for more information on which countries offer the best opportunities for organic products.

Find importers that specialise in organic products in the [International directory of organic food wholesale & supply companies](#). You can also visit special trade fairs for organic products, such as [Biofach](#) in Germany.

Ethnic food on the rise

Ethnic populations as well as local traditional dishes are important drivers for the consumption of mung beans.

Mung beans as well as their sprouts are typical for Asian cuisine, which is also popular with other nationalities.

With the increasing integration of different nationalities, European consumers are more and more exposed to transnational dishes with dry mung beans consumed as whole, flour or paste ingredient. This is in particular evident in Western Europe.

Although a large part of the mung beans is traded in bulk, as an exporter of ethnic brands you will also have the option of looking for specialised importers of Asian food products.

Tip:

Read also about the market segments below in this study.

Product innovation provides growth

Mung beans offer many possibilities as an ingredient. However, their application in elaborated products in Europe is still limited compared to the many uses in Asia.

More attention to ethnic cuisine and health food will stimulate product innovation with mung beans, such as the development of [mung bean pasta](#) or [vermicelli](#). Companies are also receptive to innovative products, for example, Italian egg supplier Eurovo Group struck a deal in 2018 with a company that developed a [mung-bean based vegan egg](#) to expand the product's distribution.

To benefit as a bulk supplier of increasing product innovation, you could explore the possibilities of providing semi-processed products such as bean flour or paste.

Tips:

If you want to supply semi-processed products, contact the most experienced importers in pulses, protein or other similar food ingredients.

Keep up to date on new food trends in Europe by visiting news sites such as [Mintel Food and Drink News](#), [Food Navigator](#), [Organic & Wellness News](#) and [Food Manufacture](#).

Check the website of *Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC)* for [New Food Products with Pulse Ingredients Launched in the European Union](#).

4. What requirements must mung beans comply with to be allowed on the European market?

What legal and non-legal requirements must my product comply with?

Food safety

To export mung beans to Europe you have to deal with strict rules and obligations on food safety. The [General Food Law](#), which regulates food safety in the European Union, applies to mung beans. As a supplier you must make sure that your exports are traceable and that safety systems (such as [HACCP](#)) are in place.

As food safety is a top priority for buyers, you can expect most of them to request extra guarantees from you in the form of certifications and compliance with food management systems, such as [GlobalG.A.P.](#) for agricultural production, [ISO 22000](#) and [BRC](#) or [IFS](#) for the processing and handling of mung beans.

Tips:

Use the [ITC Standards Map](#) or the [GFSI website](#) to learn about the different food safety management systems, hygiene standards and certification schemes. A minimum requirement is to have a HACCP-based system, but you must always check with your buyer to determine which certification scheme is most relevant for your target market.

Read about the different food management systems in the study on [buyer requirements for grains and pulses in Europe](#).

Read about your [key obligations in Europe as a food and feed business operator](#).

Extra regulation for mung beans meant for sprouting

After the [E.coli crisis in Europe](#) caused by bean sprouts in 2011, the European Commission took extra measures. The result was additional regulation for sprouts and beans that are meant for sprouting:

- Traceability requirements ([Regulation 208/2013](#))
- Microbiological criteria ([Regulation 209/2013](#))
- Approval of establishments producing sprouts ([Regulation 210/2013](#))
- Certification requirements for imports into the European Union ([Regulation 211/2013](#))

These extra measures mean that as a supplier you are obliged to provide more detailed information that ensures traceability and compliance with food safety requirements. You also have to do extensive testing, pay extra attention to processing, and adopt an extra certificate.

Tip:

See the [hygiene guidelines for seeds production](#) proposed by the European Sprouted Seeds Association ([ESSA](#)) for tips on the production of mung beans meant for the sprouting industry.

Maximum Residue Limits

If you want to export mung beans to Europe, you must take Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs) into account.

You can find the Maximum Residue Limits for pesticides that might be used on mung beans in the [EU Pesticide Database](#). Using the term “beans” (code number 0300010) or the type of pesticide as search terms will yield the corresponding MRLs for common bean varieties.

Be aware that the MRL requirements for organic mung beans are much more stringent.

Tips:

Read the [European Union Factsheet on contaminants](#) and the [European Union Factsheet on new rules](#)

on [pesticide residues in food](#).

Take extra precaution with organically produced beans. You must avoid the use of any chemical pesticide and cross-contamination (contamination from conventional products or production fields).

Find out about the general export requirements for mung beans by consulting the [EU Trade Helpdesk](#). Fill in the product code for the specific bean (0713310), the country of origin and the destination to find the information you need.

What additional requirements do buyers often have?

Quality requirements

If you are planning to export mung beans to Europe, you will have to meet the European quality standards.

Normally quality standards are set by:

- The [European Commission](#) (EC)
- The [United Nations Economic Commission for Europe](#) (UNECE)
- The [Codex Alimentarius](#) of the Food and Agriculture Organisation

For mung beans there are no specific European standards. You can take the standards of producing countries Myanmar or Australia as an indication. Be aware that European buyers can apply different standards:

- [Australian Pulse Standards 2015/2016](#) (see page 79)
- [Standards Specifications for Myanmar Pulses, Beans, Oil Seeds and Maize](#) (see from page 17)

The Australian Mungbean Association also published a [document for visual quality inspection](#).

Labelling requirements

If you want to export to Europe, you must label your product. These labels must comply with European regulation.

The following items should be on the label of pre-packed mung beans:

- Official product name
- Physical condition or treatment
- List of ingredients and allergens
- Class, size (code), number of batches, net weight in metric units
- Statement that the product is destined for human consumption
- Best-before date or use-by date
- Instructions or special conditions for storage or use
- Place of origin or provenance
- Name and address of the importer established in the European Union
- Name and address of exporter
- Lot marking on pre-packaged foodstuffs (to ensure traceability of individual batches)

In addition, the label should include any certification logo (if applicable) and/or retailer logo (in the case of products marketed under a private label).

You should use English on you labels, unless your buyer indicates otherwise. Multilingual labels are commonly used on consumer packaging, but the language of the destination country must be included in any case.

For processed beans, consumer packed products providing nutritional information is also compulsory.

Tips:

Read more about [food labelling on the EU Trade Helpdesk](#) and [food information to consumers](#) on the website of the European Commission.

For information about consumers labels see [European Union Regulation 1169/2011](#). This regulation includes the obligation of providing nutrition information.

Packaging and handling requirements

Polypropylene or multilayer paper bags with a capacity of 25 kg are commonly used as packaging for mung beans. Sometimes 1000 kg bags are used. Different European buyers may have different preferences.

If you want to use other forms of packaging, you should take [EU legislation for food contact materials](#) into account.

Mung beans should be kept dry, dark, cool and well ventilated during storage, loading and shipment.

Mung beans from different harvest periods should not be mixed, as the older seeds will downgrade the entire lot.

Containers should be clean and the cargo must be protected from moisture, pests and cross-contamination (especially with organic produce).

Organic certification

Although organic certified mung beans are still a niche, the growing organic market has the focus of several specialised European buyers.

To supply organic mung beans in the European Union you need to use production methods as laid down in [European Union legislation](#).

Tips:

Read about organic farming and European guidelines in this field on the [European Union website on organic farming](#). Be aware that growing organic mung beans can be difficult and getting certified can be costly.

Read about organic certification in the study on [buyer requirements for grains and pulses in Europe](#).

Social compliance and sustainability

European buyers are paying increasing attention to the social and environmental impact of their business. As an exporter you are part of the supply chain and share this responsibility.

Tips:

Check your company's current social performance and implement the [amfori BSCI code of conduct](#). You can also find many practical tools in the [amfori BSCI resources](#).

Read about the different social programmes and initiatives in our study on [buyer requirements for grains and pulses in Europe](#).

What are the requirements for niche markets?

Fair trade and environmental certification

Fair trade and sustainable certification is still an insignificant requirement for mung beans by European buyers. However, certification can help your product to stand out and can help attract consumers who are more aware of these issues.

As a smaller supplier you can anticipate on the future growth of fair trade by preparing your company on the certification requirements.

Tips:

Make sure you know buyers are interested before you get specific certification.

If your product complies with a fair trade scheme, find a specialised European buyer who is familiar with sustainable and/or fair trade products.

Read about fair trade and environmental certification in the study on [buyer requirements for grains and pulses in Europe](#).

5. What competition do you face on the European mung bean market?

What are the opportunities and barriers?

Quality and food safety are important issues to differentiate your company from other suppliers. European buyers are very aware of the potential quality risks when purchasing mung beans. The control on mung beans for sprouting purposes has been sharpened.

Buyers will ask for samples and will get these analysed in laboratories to ensure they receive the right quality. In trusted relationships quality control could take place more often in origin and samples are not needed.

As a supplier you have to know the quality of your product, but the quality test in your home country is not necessarily conclusive for your buyer. The tests done in laboratories in a European country may differ considerably from tests by laboratories in your country. There might be differences in terms of parameters tested and the residue levels that are considered permissible.

The European market for this product is not protected by import tariffs. The [general import tariff for mung beans](#) in Europe is 0%.

Tips:

Make sure your product is absolutely clean. If you send a sample, make sure it is representative and corresponds to the shipment you have planned.

Prove yourself to be a reliable supplier in order to establish a long-term trade relation. Efficient communication and meeting agreements are essential to build trust.

See our [tips for doing business with European buyers](#) of grains and pulses.

What are substitute products?

Consumers can switch easily between different types of pulses or simply purchase the product they are most familiar with. Mung beans are slightly more expensive in retail and are not the most popular pulses. Their use depends on the typical Asian dishes in which mung beans are a common ingredient. In most dishes with beans, [kidney bean](#) varieties are much more often used than the exotic mung bean.

In Europe, mung beans are the dominant bean type used for sprouting (similar to Asian tradition). Sprouted mung beans enjoy much more familiarity among European consumers and have little competition of other products. Therefore you will have a stronger position if you can include in your supply mung beans that are fit for sprouting.

Tip:

Include different varieties of beans and high standard mung beans in your offer for germination (sprouting). Avoid focusing on a single product.

Who are your rivals?

The competition in mung beans depends on volume, local demand and international pricing. Differences in quality between supplying countries is also a strong influence. This means that the competitive landscape can shift accordingly. Shortfalls due to climate or crop failure can make prices rise quickly.

Asia dominates global production

According to [Feedipedia](#) Asia is responsible for 90% of the mung bean production.

About 50% of the worldwide mung beans is produced and almost entirely consumed by India. China is responsible for 17% of the legume production of mung beans.

There are no detailed production data on the production volumes of these Asian countries. Production varies annually. Based on several news sources, production for 'green' mung beans (excluding black grams / urad beans) can be roughly estimated as follows: [India](#) (1.4 million tonnes), [China](#) (0.6 million tonnes) and [Myanmar](#) (0.4 million tonnes and 0.5 million tonnes urad beans). Up-to-date statistics are not available.

According to [International Food Trader](#) (goIFT) Argentina's production of mung beans has increased significantly and reached an estimated 27 thousand tonnes in 2016.

Australia intends to compete on [quality](#) with 70 to 80 thousand tonnes annually. In 2014, the [Australian Mungbean Association](#) (AMA) set a goal to increase production volumes to 170 thousand tonnes within five years.

Myanmar and China are the principle suppliers to Europe

China and Myanmar dominate the export of mung beans to Europe. Their export includes mung beans that are allowed for sprouting. India and Argentina are gaining greater market shares at the expense of Chinese exports.

China has a very large internal and regional market. Although the supply from China has decreased significantly in the past five years, it is still the second largest supplier to Europe.

Myanmar is positioning itself more and more as a global supplier. Most of Myanmar's export is destined for India, but a further export growth to Europe can be expected since sanctions have been relieved since April 2013. The European Commission, in 2018, gave a positive [evaluation](#) of Myanmar's control systems for microbiological contamination in seeds for sprouting. Mung bean producers in Myanmar also received considerable help from abroad by international consortia such as:

- the [Pulses People Planet & Profit \(P4\)](#) project
- the [Dutch Vegetable Sector Support Myanmar](#)

Tips:

Estimate your competitive position by reading annual forecasts provided by international and regional associations, such as the [news updates of the India Pulses and Grains Association](#). You can also find other associations via the [Global Pulse Confederation](#).

Get experienced in the trade of mung beans first before competing on the European market. Don't underestimate your competitors and the quality requirements in Europe.

How much power do you have as a supplier when negotiating with buyers?

Mung beans are either imported by sprouting companies or traded by specialised importers destined for both ethnic and conventional retailers.

Your power for negotiation depends on the quality and compliance of your product as well as on the market situation of production volumes and demand. The Asian market is leading the supply and demand and has a great influence on the global market.

For Europe you can improve your position in negotiation when supplying a superior quality or provide mung beans that are fit for sprouting in Europe.

Tips:

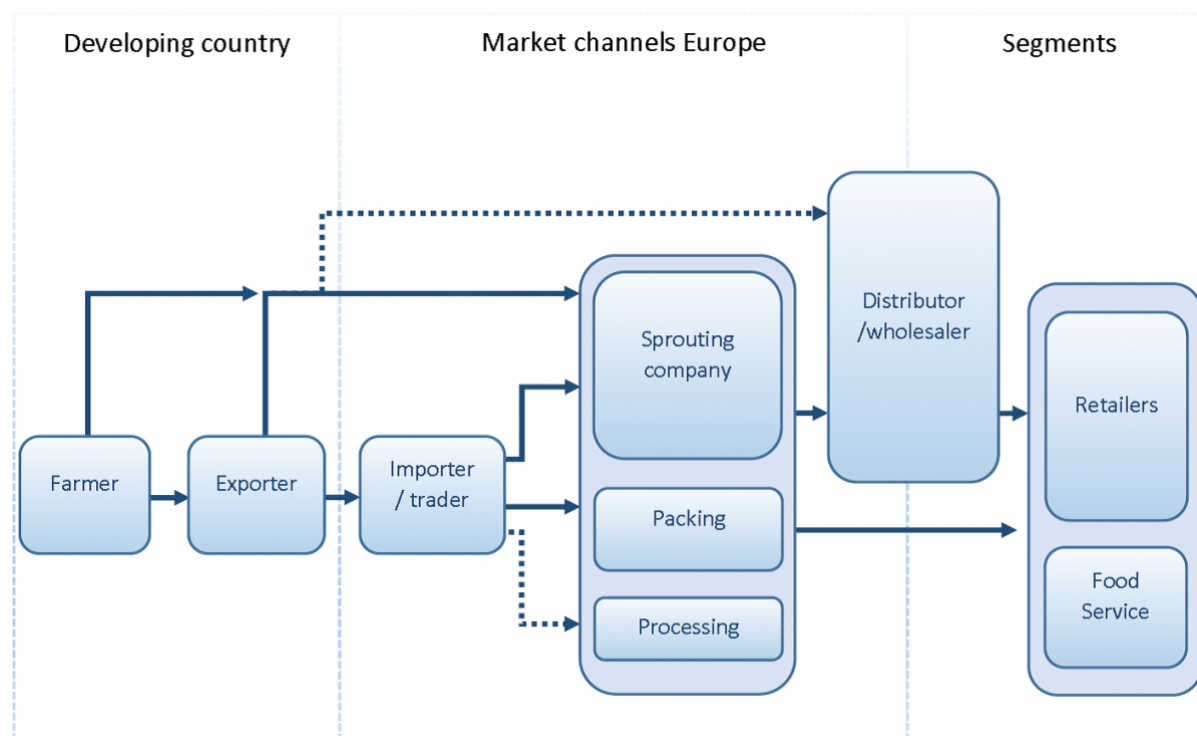
Improve your trade position by convincing your buyer that you are a valuable trading partner. For example, by gaining additional certification, complying with strict regulation for mung beans for sprouting, or by combining your offer with complementary products, such as other types of pulses or special grains.

Evaluate the possibility of integrating your supply chain with that of a strong partner in Europe. This facilitates the supply to the major retail channels or important sprouting companies. Make sure your

company is ready for such commitment in terms constant quality and reliable supply.

6. Through what channels can you get mung beans on the European market?

Figure 4: Trade channels and segments for mung beans



Well-developed trade channels

Mung beans are not the largest traded pulse in Europe. However, you can still expect trade channels to be well developed and businesses to be mature and experienced.

Mung beans arrive in Europe through importers that are specialised in sourcing, trading and/or managing local brands. These are the companies you should aim for as a foreign supplier. As an exporter it is important to have a cleaning and packing facility, or at least have access to one.

Tips:

Make sure to have access to a [HACCP](#) certified cleaning and packing facility for beans.

Look for potential buyers at major trade events, such as [SIAL](#), [Anuga](#) and [Biofach](#) (for organic products).

Sprouting companies play an important role

A very large share of mung beans in Europe is used for sprouting. It is a relatively transparent market with few larger companies, mainly in Northern Europe. The larger sprouting companies cultivate up to 25 thousand

tonnes of bean sprouts a year.

Strict regulation has forced European sprouting companies to adapt excellent conditions, which has made sprouting a specialised business.

As an exporter you will find opportunities for your mung beans in the sprouting sector. However, exporting sprouts to Europe yourself will be nearly impossible due to the limited shelf life and expensive air freight.

Tips:

Find European sprouting companies through [the European Sprouted Seeds Association](#).

See also the [CBI's Tips for Finding Buyers in the European Grains and Pulses Sector](#).

Ethnic segment offer most opportunities for dry mung beans

Mung beans are typically used in traditional Asian cuisines. This makes ethnic shops and food services (hotels, restaurants) important segments for their purchase.

Some of the specialised wholesalers that supply these ethnic segments are also importers of Asian brands and pre-packaged products. This provides opportunities for exporters that supply consumer brands.

In countries with larger Asian communities, such as the United Kingdom, mung beans have been adopted by conventional supermarkets as well. Most other countries supermarkets primarily sell sprouted mung bean.

Tips:

Try to connect to importing wholesalers of ethnic food, using databases such as [Europages](#).

7. What are the end-market prices for mung beans?

See the chart below for a breakdown of consumer prices for mung beans.

Consumer prices of dry mung beans are slightly higher than other dry beans

Retail prices in Europe for dry mung beans are 3 to 4.5 euros per kilo. That is slightly higher than most dry beans.

Bean sprouts are priced between 2.5 and 8 euros per kilo, depending on the package size and retail outlet. Organic bean sprouts can have a mark-up of up to 50%.


As an exporter you should realize that trade prices and retail prices are not directly linked and behave in their own way.

Tip:


Find information on consumer prices in online shops or the websites of supermarket chains. See for example [Tesco](#), [Albert Heijn](#) or [Carrefour](#).

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