

The European market potential for baobab

The European market for natural health products is showing healthy growth. A major driver of growth is rising consumer awareness of the harmful effects of synthetic ingredients. As a result, natural health product companies are seeking natural ingredients that have active and functional properties for their products. This situation represents an opportunity for baobab suppliers because of its unique properties.

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1. Product description

Baobab (*Adansonia digitata*) is the largest tree species of the genus *Adansonia*, from which its fruits are derived. Baobab is native to the African continent, typically found in sub-Saharan African countries. The baobab tree takes around 16–23 years to mature and produce its flowers.

Baobab is a multi-purpose tree; its fruit pulp, seeds, leaves, flowers, roots and bark can be used for human consumption. Baobab is high in vitamin C, phosphorus, calcium, fibre, carbohydrates, protein, potassium and lipids. The powder is made of baobab fruit, which is the main ingredient on the European market.

Baobab has a wide range of active properties, such as anti-malarial, anti-inflammatory, antioxidant and anti-microbial. The seeds are used as a thickener for meals, while its leaves are eaten as a vegetable. Baobab roots, leaves, bark, fruits and seeds can also be used in order to treat diarrhoea, asthma, anaemia, infections and skin disorders.

Baobab powder is used in food and health products because of its nutritional qualities. The [British company Aduna markets baobab powder](#) stating vitamin C and fibre on the product packaging. The company markets baobab as 'the feel-good fruit'. [Golden Greens also highlights the vitamin C content of baobab](#), as well as labelling it 'high in fibre and antioxidants'. Many companies market their baobab powder as 'suitable for vegans/vegetarians', as consumers are looking for products without animal-based ingredients.

Table 1 Baobab fruit pulp nutritional content, in mg/100 g

Constituent	Content (mg/100 g)
Ascorbic acid (vitamin C)	280.00–300.00**
Calcium	293.00**
Phosphorus	96.00–118.00
Carbohydrates	75.60
Soluble and insoluble dietary fibres	52.00

Potassium	2.31
Protein	2.30
Lipids	0.27

** Ascorbic acid compared with oranges of 51 mg/100 g and calcium compared with milk of 125 mg/100 g

Source: sciencedirect.com

The antioxidant content of baobab fruit pulp is higher than that of berries, cranberries and pomegranate. This fact is important, since the consumer demand for antioxidant products is increasing. The [global market for food antioxidants](#) reached USD 360.7 million in 2016; this market is expected to grow at a compound annual growth rate of 5% by 2023.

Baobab powder has no unique HS code. It is traded under HS code 11063090, which refers to flour, meal and powder of dried fruits, other than bananas. In 2008, the dried pulp harvested from baobab fruit was first approved for sale in the European Union; it has seen high growth since then. This report looks at baobab and its applications in the health products industry.

Tip:

Educate yourself on the benefits and nutritional profile of baobab. Use scientific sources. This process is important when approaching European buyers. Make sure that you use references to scientific sources in your marketing materials. For example, see websites such as [sciencedirect.com](#).

2. What makes Europe an interesting market for baobab?

Europe has an attractive market for baobab, since there is a growing demand for supplements as well as ingredients with high nutrient content and antioxidant properties. The increasing life expectancy of European consumers makes them look for products that boost their overall health. However, the demand for baobab is hampered by factors such as low consumer awareness and a lack of scientific evidence supporting the efficacy of baobab.

Baobab is a nutritious fruit, having applications in the functional food sector, including supplements and food products. Figure 1 shows the growth in the European market for vitamins and supplements.

According to Figure 1, the European market for vitamins and supplements is growing. It is expected that this growth will continue in the foreseeable future. The market is driven by increasing health consciousness among consumers. According to Grand View Research, the [powdered segment](#) accounts for about 37% of the total market.

Table 2 Imports of flour, meal and powder of dried fruits, other than bananas to the EU, 2011-2018

Flour, meal and powder of dried fruits, other than bananas, HS code 11063090	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
EU28/` 000 EUR	66,924	70,092	81,603	97,016	131,970	116,067	105,147	114,094
% change		4.73%	16.42%	18.89%	36.03%	-12.05%	-9.41%	8.51%
EU28/` 000 tonnes	20	20	20	21	20	21	23	25
% change		-0.09%	2.03%	5.31%	-6.94%	4.36%	8.68%	9.58%

Source: Eurostat

European imports of flour, meal and powder of dried fruits, other than bananas increased in value as well as volume between 2011 and 2018. In 2018, imports reached 25,000 tonnes, an increase of 25% from 2011. From 2011 to 2018, the value of imports increased by 70%.

Baobab is wild-harvested and is manually collected by local villagers. A single baobab tree can produce over 1,500 baobab fruit per year. According to the [African Baobab Alliance](#), the exports of baobab reached 450 tonnes in 2017. It is forecast that the exports of baobab will reach 5,000 tonnes by 2025. Baobab powder accounts for about 2% of the total imports of fruit powder with HS code 11063090.

[The European market for baobab ingredients](#) is expected to increase by about 4% in the coming years. The leading markets are in Germany, France and the UK.

Some of the main obstacles to the growth of the baobab ingredient market are low consumer awareness and a lack of scientific evidence that highlights the health benefits of baobab. This fact makes it harder for suppliers to approach European buyers, as they would rather deal in ingredients with which consumers are familiar.

Some say that the white colour of baobab makes it difficult to stand out and appeal to consumers. It is harder for consumers to associate this colour with a fruit and thus its health benefits.

The quality of baobab is also a major challenge. There are many product varieties, making it difficult to set a price level for baobab suppliers. The appearance of poor quality further damages trust in European buyers.

The demand for baobab ingredients is dampened by these factors. These factors also put downward pressure on prices. Robust quality standards for baobab are important in order to raise demand in Europe. Since baobab is not a plantation crop, suppliers rely on existing trees for harvest. Climate change and subsequent changes in rainfall pose another threat to the baobab supply in Africa.

Europe has one of the largest supplement markets in the world. European consumers are increasingly looking for ways to improve and boost their health. This trend is because of an ageing population and an increase in health consciousness among European consumers. It is forecast that the demand for natural ingredients for

baobab will continue to increase in future.

Tips:

See the CBI report on [Tips for finding buyers](#) as well as [Doing business](#) for more information about building and maintaining relationships with European buyers.

See the [CBI report on trends](#) in the European sector for health products. You can find more information on how to tap into opportunities on the European market for health products with baobab ingredients.

3. Which European countries offer the most opportunities for baobab?

The European countries that offer baobab suppliers the most opportunities are the UK, Germany, France, the Netherlands and Austria. These countries have a robust natural health product industry and have some of the largest consumer markets in Europe. There are several producers of baobab products in the UK and Germany.

UK

The UK is one of the most attractive country markets for baobab exporters. The UK has one of the largest consumer markets in Europe. There is an increasing demand for nutritional supplements. According to Mintel, the [UK supplements market](#) reached GBP 421 million in 2016. Around 46% of British consumers take supplements on a daily basis. There is an increasing demand for more organic products in the EU.

According to the [2019 Organic Market report](#) published by the Soil Association, the organic products market in the UK grew by 5.3% to reach GBP 2.5 billion in 2018. The organic products market has been growing for 8 years.

In the UK, many new products are being introduced with baobab. Yeo Valley Organic, a leading dairy company, launched a yogurt that contains baobab in January 2018. Between January and March 2018, the UK online retailer Ocado recorded a 27% increase in the sales of baobab products. The UK company Aduna specialises in baobab products.

Other market players include [Golden Greens](#), [Superfood Outlet](#), [Baotic](#), [Fit Delis](#), [Minvita](#), [MySuperfoods](#), [KIKI Health](#) and [Global Product](#). The latter company offers supplement tablets based on baobab fruit powder. [Forza Supplements](#) also sells baobab capsules. Some of the leading traders of baobab in the UK include the [Organic Herb Trading Company](#), [Super Nutrients](#) and [Green Origins](#). There are some contract manufacturers in the UK that produce baobab capsules; one company is the [Supplement Factory](#).

The UK is expected to remain an important market for baobab exports because of relatively high awareness of baobab among consumers. Mainstream brands such as Yeo Valley have launched products containing baobab in the UK market. Suppliers of baobab should focus on finding British buyers.

A potential no-deal Brexit may disrupt the supply chains for ingredients such as baobab. This situation creates uncertainty for suppliers of baobab. It may take some time to renegotiate trade deals with developing countries.

Germany

Germany is the largest consumer market in Europe for conventional and organic food. The demand for organic food has been increasing annually. German consumers are health-conscious, seeking high-quality and

environmentally friendly natural products. According to the German 2018 'Ökobarometer', one of the main reasons why German consumers buy organic products is the contribution to environmental protection, low amounts of pollution and animal welfare.

The [German supplements market](#) was worth EUR 1.4 billion in 2018. Dietary supplements with vitamin C are the leading segment in the vitamin category. Magnesium is the most popular mineral, followed by calcium. Baobab contains high levels of vitamin C as well as calcium, which makes Germany an attractive market for baobab.

A number of baobab suppliers are active on the German market. They include Berlin Organics, Biotiva, Baola, Keimling, Hanoju and Govinda. Africrops is a major importer.

In November 2016, the German government funded a project called [Baofood](#) to improve the food supply of baobab in East Africa. The project is led by Rhine-Waal University of Applied Sciences; it plans to examine the major issues related to the production and supply of baobab as well as to provide recommendations for sustainable production. The project ended in 2019.

Germany is an attractive market for baobab from developing countries. There is a high demand for high-quality and environmentally friendly products. Awareness of baobab is growing among health-conscious German consumers. It is expected that awareness of baobab will continue to grow in future. Exporters of baobab should consider certification, as there is a growing demand for organic products in Germany. Organic certification is also seen as a sign of quality.

France

French imports of flour, meal and powder of dried fruits, other than bananas recorded a substantial increase from 2012 to 2018. The intra-EU imports to France account for more than 90%. Major importing countries outside the EU are Turkey and Georgia.

French consumers prefer to have high quality standards when it comes to food and health products. According to the [National Agency for Food Safety, Environment and Labour in France](#) (ANES), the market for food supplements is increasing. In 2018, the market grew by 1.3% to reach EUR 1.9 billion.

According to a survey conducted by Synadet, [French consumers purchase supplements](#) for 3 reasons: stress, digestion and vitality. Around 70% of French consumers have a positive perception of supplements and around 24% say that they consume supplements more than once a year. This research suggests that there is a demand for nutraceutical products that improve consumers' well-being on the French market.

Major importers of baobab in France include [Nexira](#) and [Greentech](#). There are several brands on the French market which offer baobab powder; they include Savanature, Soleil de Madagascar and Racines Bio. Laboratoire D.Plantes produces a wide range of products containing baobab, including supplements.

France is an attractive market for baobab. The demand for supplements is increasing and French consumers expect high-quality products. There is also a growing demand for organic products. Suppliers of baobab from developing countries should consider Organic certification.

The Netherlands

The Netherlands is a leading importer of natural ingredients to Europe. According to industry sources, most baobab powder is imported by traders. Suppliers of baobab from developing countries should target importers which usually re-export to other European countries.

One of the leading traders of organic ingredients, [Tradin Organic](#), imports baobab. [Prebiotica](#) supplies baobab supplements. Other Dutch companies supplying baobab powder and supplements are BAO-MED, Superfruit, Spiruella, NP Natura as well as Pit-Pit.

Suppliers of baobab from developing countries should consider the Netherlands. Exporters should be prepared to supply larger volumes when dealing with Dutch traders. It is likely that the Netherlands will remain an important export destination for baobab in future because of its significant position as a major entry point for ingredients into Europe.

Italy

Italy has one of the largest consumer markets in Europe. It also has one of the most important markets for organic products. The organic food market has been growing annually. Italian consumers demand high-quality natural products.

One of the baobab producers from Senegal, Baobab Fruit Company Senegal, has its European office in Italy. The company supplies a wide range of baobab ingredients ranging from powder and oil to extracts. Other baobab powder suppliers in Italy include Cibocrudo, Gusto Vivo and Erbavoglio.

Italy is an attractive country market for baobab exporters in developing countries. Baobab powder is mainly available in specialist retailers. Organic certified baobab has a good potential in the Italian market.

Austria

Austria does not have a large consumer market. However, Austrian consumers have a high level of awareness of health and wellness products.

Biomega is an important Austrian producer of baobab products. The company sources its baobab from Senegal. Other baobab powder suppliers in Austria include Vegamino, Anatis Naturprodukte and Dr. Ehrenberger Synthese GmbH.

Austria is an attractive market for baobab suppliers from developing countries. The demand for high quality and organic products is increasing. Austrian consumers are health-conscious and seek natural as well as environmentally friendly products. Baobab products are available in specialist retailers and pharmacies. Suppliers of baobab should target Austrian buyers, especially those that focus on organic and natural products.

In conclusion, the most attractive countries for baobab are Western European countries. Consumers in countries such as the UK and Germany have high awareness of the baobab fruit as well as its beneficial properties due to many launches of new baobab products in recent years.

The demand for baobab is expected to continue to increase in the coming years. However, low awareness among European consumers is hampering the growth of baobab products in Europe.

Tips:

Focus on Western European countries when exporting baobab powder. In countries such as the UK and Germany, buyers are already familiar with baobab and its potential applications. When speaking to buyers from other European countries, refer to examples of baobab products already launched in Europe.

When approaching European buyers, focus on the nutritional profile of baobab. A high vitamin C content is a good selling point when approaching European buyers, as consumers are looking for natural ways to increase their vitamin intake without taking supplements.

4. Which trends offer opportunities on the European market?

Baobab has been gaining popularity on the European market. However, its benefits are still known only to a relatively small part of the population. Most of the demand for baobab products is coming from health-conscious consumers who are willing to pay for high-quality products. This reason is why there is a growing demand for certified Organic baobab, as it is perceived to be of high quality.

Increasing demand for organic baobab

Quality and contamination issues are major concerns for European buyers. Baobab powder is obtained by breaking the fruit and scooping out the pulp. The processing and storage methods are not to the same level as European standards.

During its production process, baobab powder can be contaminated by dirt, stones, nuts and other foreign matter. Inadequate storage facilities can cause mould growth and contamination by insects.

Since European buyers place a strong emphasis on quality, there is a growing demand for organic baobab. Organic certification is seen as a quality standard, increasing the reliability of ingredients on the European market.

An example of a company that supplies Organic certified baobab is [Baobab Exports](#), a joint venture between [EcoProducts](#) and [Bayoba](#).

Figure 2: Logo of EU Organic certification



Source: ec.europa.eu

Tips:

Consider Organic certification for your baobab ingredients. This certification can help you to target consumers who are looking for high-quality products. Find out more information about the [EU Organic certification](#) (EU organic logo pictured above) on the IFOAM website.

Clearly communicate with buyers that your ingredients are certified and be prepared to provide evidence.

Increase in health-conscious consumers

Consumers seeking products that represent healthier options are becoming mainstream. Although the European

population has high spending power, its consumers are facing a number of chronic and auto-immune diseases. The [European Alliance of Chronic Diseases](#) states that cancer, chronic respiratory diseases and diabetes are the leading cause of mortality in Europe. They represent 77% of the total disease burden and 86% of all deaths. European consumers are looking for preventive health solutions.

This health-consciousness trend is stimulating the demand for superfoods, which add flavour and are high in nutrients. Manufacturers are introducing superfoods in various formats to increase their presence. Baobab suppliers from developing countries can tap into this trend.

According to International Nut & Dried Fruit (INC), around half of Europeans look for some kind of [wellness benefit](#) from the food that they purchase. In Europe, obesity, diabetes and cardiovascular diseases are major health issues.

Suppliers of baobab from developing countries can tap into this trend. Baobab is particularly high in antioxidants, which can tackle obesity-related inflammation. Some research suggests that [antioxidants have a positive effect](#) on other conditions that are a side effect of obesity, such as atherosclerosis.

Tips:

Educate yourself on the EU health claims regulation. See the list of [permitted health claims](#) under the EU law.

When using the word 'superfood', you have to support your claim by scientific evidence under the EU law. Be prepared to substantiate this claim with scientific data.

Create a nutrient profile for your ingredients and products in order to make claims.

Do not make medicinal claims when approaching buyers working in the supplement industry.

Lack of awareness about baobab fruit among European consumers

Although many baobab products have been launched in Europe over recent years, there is low consumer awareness of the African fruit. European consumers are still not fully educated on the health properties of baobab fruit.

According to a [survey conducted by The Grocer](#) in 2018, only around 23% of British consumers had heard of baobab. Around 26% of those who had heard about it had also tasted it. The research highlights the low level of awareness of baobab among European consumers.

Awareness of the baobab fruit is expected to rise in future. Marketing activities from companies with baobab products are likely to raise awareness. An example of one such campaign is [#makebaobabfamous](#). There are also various websites and blogs dedicated to [raising awareness of the baobab fruit](#).

Low awareness of baobab is an obstacle for producers in developing countries. It is expected that awareness of baobab will increase in future. However, this increase is most likely in countries with sophisticated consumer markets for health products. These countries include the UK, Germany, France, Italy, Sweden and Denmark. Suppliers of baobab should take into consideration that the European market is heterogeneous in terms of consumer awareness and target country markets.

Tips:


Be willing to devote time on training and educating buyers on the benefits of baobab powder as well as its potential use in products.

Consider joining the [African Baobab Alliance](#) to receive support when marketing baobab products.


This study has been carried out on behalf of CBI by [Ecovia Intelligence](#).

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