



## [Exporting dried kidney beans to Europe](#)

Kidney beans are one of the main consumed beans in Europe. The preferred type of kidney bean depends on the local tradition and cultural influence. Supply is strong from Canada, the USA, Argentina and China. New developments in food processing and attention for health food provide opportunities for new suppliers of kidney beans. Reliable volume and competitive pricing are important factors for success.

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## 1 . Product description

The kidney bean is a variety of the common bean (*Phaseolus vulgaris*). The name is derived from its shape (and colour) of a kidney.

There are many varieties of kidney beans:

- Light red kidney bean (also known as: common kidney bean)
- Dark red kidney bean
- Light speckled kidney bean
- Red speckled kidney bean
- White kidney bean (cannellini)

Other related varieties are:

- Navy bean or white pea beans
- Pinto bean
- Black turtle or black bean

In the international [Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System](#), kidney beans are registered and traded under a specific statistical number (see table 1).

Table 1: Combined Nomenclature (CN) Code for kidney beans

Statistical Number	Product
07133300	Kidney beans, including white pea beans ( <i>Phaseolus vulgaris</i> )

Source: Eurostat (Comext)

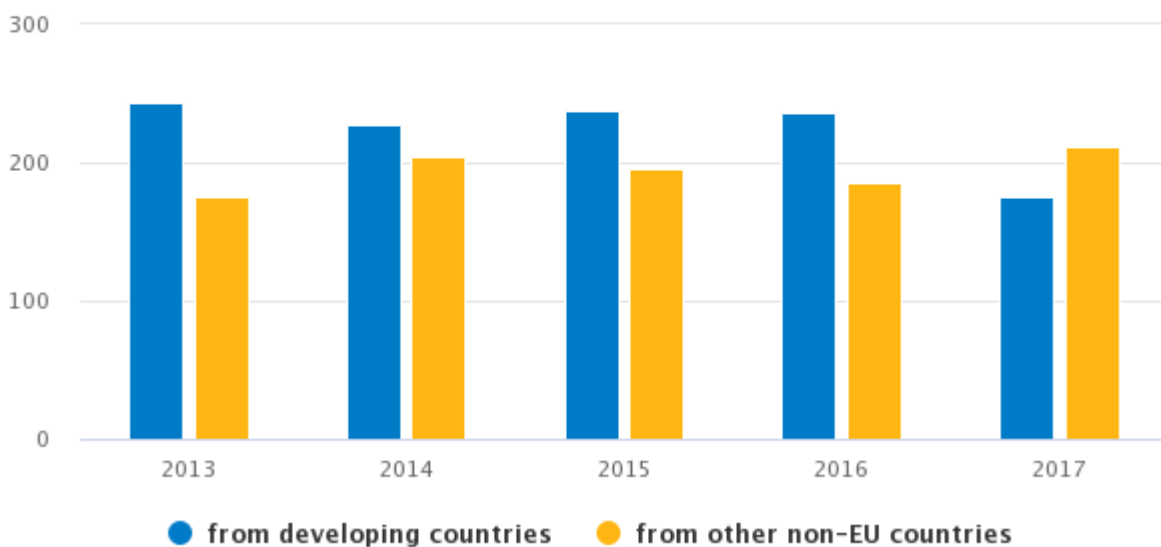
## 2 . What are the main developments on the European market for kidney beans?

### Lower exports from China create opportunities for other suppliers

Kidney beans are one of the most commonly consumed beans in Europe, where import volumes reach approximately 400 thousand tonnes. However, import in Europe from developing countries has been declining for the past five years or longer, mainly due to declining supply from China.

Traditionally Canada, China, Argentina and the USA are the main suppliers of kidney beans to Europe, ranging between 46 and 132 thousand tonnes in 2017. Since 2013, China has developed a more dominant regional focus and the USA and Argentina have partly filled in the gap. These changing trades also create opportunities for you as supplier, if you are able to compete on volume and price.

**Figure 1: European import of dry kidney beans and white pea beans**  
in 1.000 tonnes



Source: Market Access Database

### Tip:

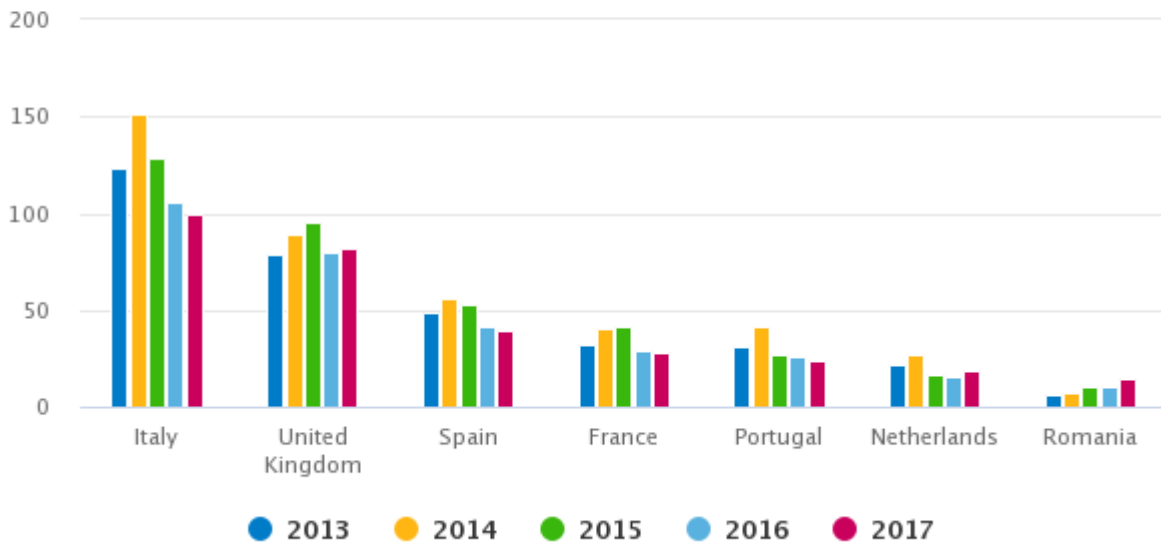
- Make sure you can offer a consistent quality and volume. The majority of kidney beans is traded in larger quantities by bulk suppliers; be prepared for this type of competition.

Italy and the United Kingdom are the main importers from non-European

countries

Figure 2: Main European importers of dry kidney beans and white pea beans from non-European countries

in € million



Source: ITC Trademap

The United Kingdom imports a large amount of kidney beans. A large ethnic Indian community consume especially red kidney beans, while British nationals eat kidney beans as *baked beans*, a typical local dish. For baked beans (or white beans in tomato sauce) the United Kingdom imports white navy beans from Canada and the United States.

In Italy the white kidney bean (also: Cannellini) is a popular variety in Central and Southern Italy. This white kidney bean is larger in size than the navy bean. Nowadays, Italy receives most kidney beans from the USA and Canada, while the dominant supply from China has declined.

Still, in most European countries the red or dark red kidney beans are the most common. Italy and the United Kingdom can be interesting markets for you as exporter due to their size. However, the different varieties of kidney beans that imported in Europe makes it important to choose your target market well.

### Tip:

- Find the right buyers for your specific product. Italy and the United Kingdom can be interesting markets to start your search, but keep in mind other potential markets, especially in the south of Europe.

## Reaching niche markets through the Netherlands and Belgium



There is not a typical trade hub for kidney beans in Europe. Most kidney beans are imported directly. But to reach niche markets you can best focus on the countries that are known for their re-export.

The Netherlands and Belgium are the most logical re-export markets for kidney beans. In terms of value, the Netherlands had the largest surplus on its trade balance, re-exporting the most kidney

beans in Europe in 2017. This can also be an indication that less-common varieties are traded through the Netherlands.

Large destination countries for re-exported kidney beans are France and Germany.

#### Tip:

- Focus on trading companies in the Netherlands and Belgium to reach potential markets and buyers that you would find difficult to supply directly.

### A large share of imports are used by the canning industry

In Europe, retailers often offer kidney beans in tin cans for reasons of convenience. The cooking time of the pre-cooked canned beans is reduced a lot compared to dry kidney beans. This convenience pattern is strongest in the northern and western European countries.

Especially the market for white beans is dominated by the canning industry. Major convenience brands, such as [Heinz](#), source their beans directly from selected farmers. You have to consider the canning industry as a potential customer group.

#### Tip:

- See the [study on canned fruit and vegetables](#) that provides more insights on the processed food market.

### Southern and Eastern Europe are bean regions

There are no detailed production statistics for kidney beans. The production of dry beans (including kidney beans) in Europe is most significant in Southern and Eastern regions such as Greece, Spain, Italy, Poland and Romania. These regions in Europe are also believed to be the main consumers of kidney beans.

The varieties that are grown are different for each country; white kidney beans are more typical for Poland and Italy, while Spain produces small dark kidney beans. The increasing production of dry beans points to stronger consumer demand for beans. This can also be a good export opportunity but you will have to verify this well with your buyer(s) on an annual basis.

#### Tip:

- For details on the European production of dry beans, see the study about [exporting dry beans to Europe](#).

### 3 . Which trends offer opportunities in the European market for kidney beans?

## Year of the pulses promoted consumption

The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) introduced 2016 as the [International Year of Pulses](#) (IYP). 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.

Kidney beans are already some of the most consumed beans, but promotion through recipes, such as 'chili con carne' can have a positive effect on further growth. The Year of the Pulses was and may still be a good initiative for you as exporter to promote your kidney beans.

However, actual results and impact of the Year of the Pulses until today remain unknown.

### Tips:

- Use the [IYP communication toolkit](#) to add information on your website or in social media.
- For more information on trends in the sector, read the study about [trends on the European grains and pulses market](#).

## Kidney beans 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 (foods claimed to have outstanding health characteristics).

Kidney beans are known for their high content of fibers and protein, making them ideal for people with diabetes or people that want to reduce their meat consumption. 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. In agricultural production use for example [Integrated Pest Management](#) (IPM) and alternative cultivation techniques for your crops.

## Organic is a growing niche

Increased attention to health, environmental and social responsibility is leading to rapid growth of the European organic market. Many grains and pulses, including kidney beans, are also available as organic products. Producing organic kidney beans can be an opportunity because the availability is often not sufficient for the growing demand.

### Tip:

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

## Ethnic food on the rise

Ethnic populations as well as local traditional dishes are important drivers for the consumption of kidney beans. With the increasing integration of different nationalities, European consumers are more and more exposed to transnational dishes with kidney beans. Examples are:

- Feijoada (black bean dish) from Brazil;
- Rajma from India;
- Caparones from Spain;
- Mexican chili con carne;
- Rice with beans from Latin America.

The introduction of traditional cuisines can help boost the consumption of specific kidney bean varieties that fit your offer.

## New forms of convenience in cooking

Although European consumers generally attach great importance to good food, time has become a precious asset in the modern lifestyle.

Compared to other bean varieties, raw kidney beans contain the highest level of the toxin [phytohemagglutinin](#) and need to be pre-soaked and cooked well before consumption. This effort of preparation prevents the sales of dry kidney beans to consumers and makes canned kidney beans much more accessible.

The food industry addresses the demand for convenience by using pre-cooked kidney beans in ready-made meals and salads. The industry also introduced new concepts of (microwave friendly) [packaging](#) and [product mixes](#). It requires you to be creative in finding different target groups for your product.

### Tips:

- Keep up to date on new food trends in Europe by visiting news sites such as [Food Navigator](#), [Organic & Wellness News](#) and [Food Manufacture](#).
- Focus on both traders and food manufacturers if you have a regular and reliable supply of kidney beans.

## 4 . What requirements should kidney beans comply with to be allowed on the European market?

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

### Food safety

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

As food safety is a top priority, expect most buyers to request extra guarantees from you in the form of certifications and compliance with food management systems, such as [GlobalG.A.P.](#) for the agricultural production and [ISO 22000](#), [BRC](#) or [IFS](#) for the processing and handling of kidney 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. Having a HACCP-based system is a minimum requirement, but you must always check with your buyers to determine which certification scheme is most relevant for your target market.
- For the full requirements on food safety, read the study on [buyer requirements](#) of grains and pulses in Europe.
- Read about your [key obligations in Europe as a food and feed business operator](#).

## Maximum Residue Limits

The maximum residue limits (MRLs) for pesticides that might be used on kidney beans can be found 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 that also applies to kidney beans and other common bean varieties. Be aware that the MRL requirements for organic kidney beans – and for kidney beans used in baby food – 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 kidney beans. Avoid the use of any chemical pesticide and cross-contamination.
- Find out about the general export requirements for kidney beans by consulting the [EU Trade Helpdesk](#): fill in the product code for “kidney beans” (07133300), the country of origin and the destination to find the information required.

## What additional requirements do buyers often have?

### Organic certification

Although organic certified kidney beans are still a niche, the growing organic market has the focus of several specialised European buyers. To supply organic kidney beans in the European Union you need to use production methods as laid down in [European Union legislation](#).

## Tips:

- Read about the organic farming principles on the [IFOAM Organics International website](#). 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.
- Read about organic certification in the study on [buyer requirements for grains and pulses in Europe](#).

## Social compliance & sustainability

European buyers are paying increasing attention to their corporate responsibilities concerning 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 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 the study on [buyer requirements for grains and pulses in Europe](#).

## Quality requirements

If you are planning to export kidney beans to Europe, you will have to meet the right quality standards. Normally these standards are set by the European Commission ([EC](#)) or the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe ([UNECE](#)).

There are no European standards for kidney beans specifically. It is best to follow the quality standards in the [Codex Alimentarius](#): international [standard for certain pulses](#), including kidney beans

For European buyers kidney beans must meet the following requirements:

- Kidney beans must be safe and fit for human consumption
- Free from abnormal flavour, odour and living insects
- Free from dirt in amounts that may be a hazard to human health
- Maximum discolouration 3%
- Maximum moisture level 15%
- Moisture levels must be lower in certain climates or when transported or stored for longer periods
- Extraneous matter less than 1% (of which mineral matter <0.25% and dead insects <0.1%)
- Quality in accordance with EU regulation on contaminants, maximum residue limits (MRLs) and microbiological properties

## Labelling requirements

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

You can read more about [food labelling on the EU Trade Helpdesk](#). For information about consumers labels see [European Union Regulation 1169/2011](#). Providing nutritional information will also be compulsory starting from December 2016.

The following items should be on the label of pre-packed kidney 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 EU



- 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.

### Packaging and handling requirements

Polypropylene or multilayer paper bags with a capacity of 25 kg are commonly used as packaging for dry kidney beans, but 1000 kg bags are also sometimes employed. Different buyers may have different preferences.

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

Some other requirements:

- Dry kidney beans should kept dry, dark, cool and well ventilated during storage, loading and shipment.
- Dry kidney 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).

## What are the requirements for niche markets?

### Fair trade and environmental certification

Fair trade and sustainable certification is still an insignificant requirement for kidney beans by EU buyers, but it can help your product to stand out from the mass of competitors and attract consumers who are more aware of these issues.

#### Tip:

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

## 5 . What competition do you face on the European kidney 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 dry kidney beans. They will ask for samples and will get these analysed in laboratories to ensure they receive the right quality — in the organic trade, buyers are extra alert. 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. 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, for example in terms of parameters tested and the residue levels that are considered permissible.

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

### Tips:

- Make sure your product is absolutely clean and if samples are sent, make sure the sample 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 vary easily between different types of (kidney) beans or simply purchase the product they are most familiar with. For typical dishes the preference for a certain type of kidney bean is more determined.

Consumer packed dry kidney beans are easiest substituted by pre-cooked or canned beans. You have to take into account a significant product competition of convenience brands or intent to become part of the supply chain for processed kidney beans.

### Who are your rivals?

The competition in kidney beans strongly relates to production variety, volume, local demand and international pricing. This means that the competitive landscape can shift accordingly.

In general, the strongest competition in exporting kidney beans to Europe are well established companies from Canada, Argentina, China and the United States.

In recent years, supplies from Argentina and the United States increased, while China is exporting less to Europe every year. However, supplies from the USA are expected to decrease significantly due to the new import tariffs.

Other countries with growing supplies of kidney beans to Europe include:

- Ukraine (8.8 thousand tonnes in 2017, new supplier);
- Djibouti (2.3 thousand tonnes, +350% in the last 5 years);
- Brazil (one thousand tonnes, +23% in the last 5 years).

Besides China, countries that supplied significantly less to Europe in 2017, with decreases ranging from 37% to 86% in the last 5 years, include:

- Ethiopia (17.3 thousand tonnes, -58%);
- Kyrgyzstan (6.7 thousand tonnes, -37%);
- Madagascar (2.6 thousand tonnes, -57%);
- Bolivia (one thousand tonnes, -46%);
- Tanzania (0.9 thousand tonnes, -58%);
- Peru (0.8 thousand tonnes, -86%).

If your kidney beans fit the bulk trade you have the best chance of gaining a market share by matching quality, volume and price of other suppliers.



### Tips:

- Keep up to date on the annual forecast provided by international and [regional associations](#) and estimate your competitive position.
- Get experienced first in the trade of kidney beans before competing for the European market. Do not underestimate your competition and the quality requirements in Europe.

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

Large food retailers have a strong position in Europe and correspondingly large buying power. Unless you are supplying a niche type of kidney bean or offering a superior quality-price ratio, you will have limited room for negotiation.

### Tips:

- Try to improve your competitive position and convince your buyer that you are a valuable trading partner, for example, by: gaining additional certification, introducing additional processing of your product or combining it 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 big food processors. Make sure your company is ready for such commitment in terms constant quality and reliable supply.

## 7 . What do the trade channels and market segments for dry kidney beans in Europe look like?

### Well-developed trade channels

The trade channels for dry kidney beans are well developed, which means that businesses are mature and experienced.

Dry kidney beans arrive in Europe through importers that are specialised in dry commodities or food processors that manage local brands. These are the companies you should aim for as a foreign supplier.

Some of the large sourcing companies build their own processing facilities in the production country, making it harder for you as an exporter to join the international trade. As an exporter it is important to have a cleaning and packing facility, or at least have access to one.

#### Tip:

- Make sure to have access to a HACCP certified cleaning and packing facility for kidney beans.

### Supermarkets are the main segments for dry kidney beans

Most of the dry beans are sold through supermarkets.

Catering establishments (such as restaurants), ethnic stores and street markets also offer beans and can be more interesting for exotic varieties. However, these are smaller segments.

Online sales through web shops is increasing, especially in northern Europe. If you offer organic kidney beans, you can also target specialised organic shops.

#### Tips:

- Look for potential buyers at major trade events, such as [SIAL](#), [Anuga](#) and [Biofach](#) (for organic products). This is also a good way of checking out the European competition.
- See the research on [trade channels and market segments](#) for grains and pulses. These provide you with general, but more detailed information.

## 8 . What are the end market prices for dry Kidney beans?



### Similar retail prices for dry and canned kidney beans

Retail prices for regular dry kidney beans in Europe vary between 2.5 and 5 euros per kilo. Canned kidney beans go for similar prices (2 - 5 euros per kilo), without taking into account the extra moisture of pre-cooking.

For exporters it is important to realise that trade prices and retail prices are not directly linked and behave in their own way.

## Tip:

- You can find information on consumer prices in online shops or the websites of supermarket chains, such as [Tesco](#), [Albert Heijn](#) or [Carrefour](#).

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