

Entering the European market for fresh chilli peppers

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The European market for fresh chilli peppers is quite specialised. It is mainly supplied by Morocco and Türkiye. Because it is a very competitive market, the best chances for success are during the off-season and with certain chilli pepper types. Still, your products must meet strict phytosanitary and food safety standards to succeed.

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1. What requirements and certifications must chilli peppers meet and have to be allowed on the European market?

There is no specific European marketing standard for chilli peppers. Therefore they must comply with the [general marketing standards \(GMS\)](#) in Annex I, Part A of EU Regulation No 543/2011. However, you can also use the [UNECE standard](#) and the [brochure developed by the UNECE based on its standard](#) to determine the specific quality criteria for your chilli peppers. The latter is an interpretative brochure with photos of varieties and the main quality defects.

For other information about the requirements your products must comply with before being exported to the European Union (EU), please check the EU trade assistance platform [My Trade Assistant of Access2Markets](#). The HS Code for chilli peppers is 07096099. You can also read our study on [buyer requirements for fresh fruit and vegetables](#).

What are mandatory requirements?

The mandatory requirements mainly concern compliance with maximum residue limits. Please remember that phytosanitary certificates will be requested if you export from specific country zones. Given the strong competition, you should export only your best chilli peppers.

Avoid pesticide residues and contaminants

Chilli plants often face problems with insects, which is why farmers use a lot of chemicals in their production. To help reduce the amount of pesticides used, it is important to follow good farming practices. [The EU legislation on MRLs \(Maximum Residue Levels\)](#) sets limits for the chemicals authorised on chilli peppers. If fresh chilli peppers have pesticide residues above those limits, they will be removed from stores. This also goes for harmful substances like heavy metals.

The EU has stricter checks for chilli pepper imports from certain countries. These origins and percentages of

chilli pepper lots that are to be inspected are outlined in [Regulation 2019/1793](#) (updated in June 2024). According to this regulation, 50% of chillies imported from the Dominican Republic and Uganda must be controlled for pesticide residues. This is 30% for chillies from Egypt, India and Thailand and 20% for chillies from Kenya, Rwanda, Türkiye and Vietnam. These inspections can be costly for importers, which might raise the price of the peppers.

If you want to see the latest list of pesticides allowed on chilli peppers, you can [visit the EU database for pesticide residues](#). Choose the crop in the 'Product box' and it will show you all the approved pesticides and their MRLs.

Keep in mind that some countries, like Germany, the Netherlands, Austria, and the United Kingdom, have stricter rules about the chemicals that can be used on chilli pepper imports.

Here's a table that summarises the most common pesticides used on chilli peppers and their MRLs.

Table 1: EU MRLs on pesticides most commonly used on chilli peppers

Active substance	EU MRL	Approval expiration date	Type of pesticide
ABAMECTIN	0.03	31 March, 2038	Pesticide (Acaricide, Insecticide, Nematicide)
COPPER COMPOUNDS	5	31 December, 2025	Fungicide/ Bactericide
CYPERMETHRIN	0.5	31 January, 2029	Insecticide
DELTAMETHRIN	0.2	15 August, 2026	Insecticide
LAMBDA-CYHALOTHRIN	0.1	31 August, 2026	Insecticide
MANCOZEB	5		Fungicide
SPINOSAD	0.6	15 March, 2025	Insecticide

Source: Thierry Paqui-compilation based on interviews and EU database for pesticide residues (October 2024)

Tips:

Please confirm with your importer if the chemicals you are using to manage pests and fungal attacks are allowed in their country or in the countries they plan on exporting your chilli peppers to.

Find out the MRLs that are relevant for chilli peppers by [consulting the EU MRL database](#), in which all harmonised MRLs can be found. You can search on your product or pesticide used. The database shows the list of the MRLs associated with your product or pesticide. For chilli peppers, the same MRLs apply as for 'Sweet peppers/bell peppers' (code 0231020).

Reduce the amount of pesticides by applying [Integrated Pest Management \(IPM\)](#) in production. IPM is an agricultural pest control strategy that includes growing practices and chemical management.

Read more about [MRLs on the website of the European Commission](#). Check with your buyers if they have additional requirements for MRLs and pesticide use.

Make sure that contamination of lead in chilli peppers remains below 0.10 mg/kg and cadmium below 0.050 mg/kg, according to the [maximum levels for certain contaminants in foodstuffs](#).

Follow phytosanitary regulations

Since December 2019, the European Union regulation for the [trade in plants and plant products from non-EU countries](#) has changed. The regulation requires that chilli peppers must have a phytosanitary certificate before being imported into the European Union. The certificate must guarantee that chilli peppers are:

- properly inspected;
- free from quarantine pests, within the requirements for regulated non-quarantine pests and practically free from other pests;
- in line with the plant health requirements of the EU, laid down in [Implementing Regulation \(EU\) 2019/2072](#).

There are additional requirements for different regions. The phytosanitary certificate must include an official declaration that the chilli peppers originate in a country or region that is free from the pests mentioned below, or effectively inspected and treated to ensure its absence.

Table 2: Pests from certain origins that require an additional declaration

Origin	Pests that require an additional declaration
Countries of the African continent, Cape Verde, Saint Helena, Madagascar, La Reunion, Mauritius and Israel	<i>Thaumatotibia leucotreta</i> (Meyrick)
Australia, the Americas and New Zealand	<i>Bactericera cockerelli</i> (Sulc.)
Third countries	<i>Neoleucinodes elegantalis</i> (Guenée)
Belize, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Puerto Rico, United States and French Polynesia where <i>Anthonomus eugenii</i> Cano is known to occur	<i>Anthonomus eugenii</i> Cano

To avoid exclusion in the trade with the European Union, several countries have taken measures at different moments in time. For example, in 2019, the Ugandan Ministry of Agriculture imposed a restriction on the export

of chilli peppers, allowing only a few traders to export that meet a tight set of requirements. Only months later, over 90 percent of the Kenyan suppliers stopped their export to Europe due to the strict phytosanitary restrictions and the presence of the Codling Moth.

Tips:

Make sure your plant health authority can comply with the phytosanitary requirements before planning your export. Get in contact with the [National Plant Protection Organisation \(NPPO\)](#) in your country and make sure they can issue a phytosanitary certificate on time.

Read which additional declaration is needed on the phytosanitary certificate for chilli peppers (capsicum) in [the document of the Dutch food safety authority NVWA](#).

Maintain high quality standards

Chilli peppers must comply with the European [General Marketing Standard \(GMS\)](#). However, we recommend that you adapt the quality of your product to the [marketing standard for chilli peppers developed by the UNECE \(FFV-61\)](#). It can help you understand which minimum marketing requirements your chilli peppers must comply with. The UNECE has developed [an interpretative brochure for its standard on chilli peppers](#). Thanks to the photos in this brochure, you will be in a better position to identify your partners' expectations regarding the quality of chilli peppers sold in Europe.

The provisions found in the UNECE standard for chilli peppers are similar to those found in all product-specific standards. These provisions address issues related to quality, size, tolerances, presentation and labelling.

Regarding quality, the UNECE standard for chilli peppers sets out three classes (Extra, Class I and Class II). Class I is the preferred quality in the European market. Table 3 describes the requirements and tolerances for Class I chillies.

Table 3: General quality requirements and permissible tolerances for chilli peppers

Minimum quality requirements (all classes)
1. intact, the stalk and calyx may be missing, provided that the break is clean and the adjacent skin is not damaged
2. sound; produce affected by rotting or deterioration such as to make it unfit for consumption is excluded
3. clean, practically free of any visible foreign matter
4. practically free from pests
5. practically free from damage caused by pests

6. fresh in appearance, including stalk and calyx
7. firm
8. free from damage caused by low and/or high temperatures
9. free of abnormal external moisture
10. free of any foreign smell and/or taste

permissible tolerances for class I chilli peppers
1. a slight defect in shape
2. slight defects in colouring; colour change due to ripening is not considered a defect
3. slight skin defects (up to 2.0% of the product surface)
4. a slightly damaged stalk, if present
5. a tolerance of 10% is allowed for chilli peppers that meet Class II standards
6. a tolerance of 10% is allowed for chilli peppers not meeting the size criteria (if sized)

Source: UNECE standard for chilli peppers

Tips:

Avoid proposing Class II products as most suppliers to the European market offer Extra Class or Class I products.

Always aim for Extra Class products. Your buyer will be more successful at selling them compared to those offered by your competitors.

Check on product size uniformity

The size of chilli peppers is determined by either length or diameter (see table 4). Chilli peppers in a package must be uniform and packages should contain only chilli peppers of the same origin, variety or commercial type, quality and size (if sized). Nevertheless, a mixture of chilli peppers of distinctly different colours and/or

commercial types may be packed together in a sales package, provided they are uniform in quality and of the same origin.

For chilli peppers sized by diameter, the difference between the diameters in the same package may not exceed 2 cm.

Table 4: Provisions on product size

Size code	Length in centimetres
1	<4
2	4<8
3	8<12
4	12<16
5	>16

Tip:

Maintain strict compliance with quality requirements and deliver the quality as agreed with your buyer. Being careless with product requirements or stretching the minimum standards will give buyers a reason to claim on quality issues.

Use protective packaging

Chilli peppers should be packed in a way that ensures proper protection for the product. Boxes must be new and of good quality. The visible part of the contents of the package must be representative of the entire contents.

Packages must be free of all foreign matter. The materials used inside the package must be clean and of such a quality that it prevents any external or internal damage to the produce.

Common package sizes are 2, 4 or 5kg. Small chilli peppers are often packed in 2 or 4kg cardboard boxes. In retail, the chilli peppers are often sold loose, but in some cases retailers require additional packaging in trays or punnets. Retail packaging is often used for exclusive varieties or chilli pepper mixes.

Payment and delivery terms

The payment methods used often depend on the volumes you export. There is no specific rule. The most common method of payment used is the open account. The exporter ships the goods and provides all the

necessary documents directly to the importer via a forwarding agent. They then agree on a deadline for the payment to be made to the exporter. Payments can be made within 30, 60 or 90 days. The longer the period, the greater the risk to the exporter who may have made several exports before receiving any payment. In the case of test shipments, it is recommended to receive payment for an initial shipment, before deciding to send further shipments. As with any business, it takes time to build relationships based on trust.

Regarding delivery terms, FOB or CIF incoterms are most often used. But above all it depends on your financial base. These issues are not fixed and are subject to negotiation on a case-by-case basis..

Tips:

Always discuss the specific requirements for weight, units and packaging with your buyer.

For other additional requirements, such as labelling, payment and delivery terms, see our study on [buyer requirements for fresh fruit and vegetables](#) and our [tips for doing business with European buyers](#). Also check the legal requirements for materials that come into contact with food in [Regulation \(EC\) No 1935/2004](#) (consolidated version of 27/3/2021).

The UNECE standard also provides a table on pungency based on the Scoville Heat Unit (SHU)

Table 5: Indications regarding chilli pepper pungency

Level of pungency	Scoville Units	Total capsaicinoids (microg/gm dry weight)	Examples of commercial types
Mild	900 - 1,999	60 - 133	Ancho, Poblano, Pasilla, X'catik
Medium	2,000 - 19,999	134 - 1,333	Fresno, Cherry, Jalapeño, Prik-Chee-Fah
Hot	20,000 - 100,000	1,334 - 6,600	Serrano, Tabasco, Cayenne, Piquin, Manzano, C. baccatum
Extra hot	> 100,000	> 6,600	Bird's eye, Fatalli, Scotch Bonnet, Habanero, Dorset Naga, Naga Jolokia, Naga Viper, Trinidad Scorpion

Figure 1: Example of chilli peppers presented in a French supermarket ([Grand Frais](#))



Source: Photo by Thierry Paqui

Maintain temperature during product handling

After the harvest, it is important to cool the peppers down as soon as possible so as to reduce water losses. The ideal temperatures during transport should be around 7-8 degrees Celsius.

Tips:

Always discuss the specific requirements for size and packaging with your buyer.

Study the proper post-harvest practices and handling for fresh chilli peppers on [Frutas-hortalizas.com](#) and [cargohandbook.com](#), or [the vegetable produce facts](#) of the post-harvest centre of the University of California.

Make sure your chilli peppers are well preserved to ensure optimal freshness and taste. Supply chain logistics should not affect the product taste in any significant way.

For other additional requirements such as labelling, see [CBI Buyer Requirements for fresh fruit and vegetables](#).

What additional requirements do buyers often have?

Your buyers may have additional requirements. These usually relate to certifications that will make it easier for your products to circulate on the European market, such as [GLOBALG.A.P.](#) certification.

Obtain commonly used certifications

Common certifications for fresh chilli peppers include [GLOBALG.A.P.](#), [BRCGS](#) and [IFS](#). GLOBALG.A.P. focuses on good farming practices while BRCGS and IFS are food safety management systems based on HACCP. It is recommended to use management systems recognised by the [Global Food Safety Initiative \(GFSI\)](#).

Apply additional sustainability and social standards

Some of the most relevant European laws and legislation related to environmental sustainability are incorporated into the [European Green Deal](#) (EGD). The EGD is a set of policies whose final aim is to lead Europe to climate neutrality by 2050. Climate neutrality means reaching a balance between greenhouse gas emissions and removals, which is expected to limit global warming. This state is known as zero emissions and can be reached if global warming is limited to 1.5 C° by the end of this century.

The most important impacts of the EGD for chilli pepper suppliers are the following:

- Stimulation of organic production (and consumption) - one of the aims of the [Farm-to-Fork Strategy](#) is to increase the share of organic agricultural land to 25% in Europe by 2030.
- Introduction of the environmental footprint methodology - In line with 'sustainable food systems' the European Commission will publish official methods for 'green claims' to prevent 'greenwashing' and better

inform consumers about the food choices they make.

- Endorsing greater corporate responsibility and sustainability standards through the [Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive](#).
- Reducing packaging waste - The main aim of the packaging and packaging waste directive is that “All packaging in the EU is reusable or recyclable in an economically viable way by 2030”. Some countries are aiming to reduce plastic even faster than proposed by the EGD. For example, France has already imposed a ban on plastic packaging for fresh fruits and vegetables in containers of less than 1.5 kg.
- Reducing the use of pesticides - The European Commission [withdrew a proposal to reduce the use of pesticides by 50% in 2030](#) in March 2024. The Sustainable Use of Pesticides Directive (2009/128/EC) remains in force.

Tips:

Implement at least one environmental and one social standard. See the [Basket of standards](#) of SIFAV Sustainability Initiative for Fruit and Vegetables.

For other additional requirements such as payment and delivery terms, see [CBI Buyer Requirements for fresh fruit and vegetables](#) and the [Tips for doing business with European buyers](#).

What are the requirements for niche markets?

Use organic certification to increase product value

Organic certification can be an interesting way to set your chilli peppers apart and market them at a higher value. The demand for organic vegetables is growing, although it is mainly fulfilled by European growers. For suppliers in tropical countries it is very challenging to produce organically due to a variety of pests common for chilli peppers.

In Europe, to market crops labelled organic you must have achieved the organic certification of your production. Imports of organic products are covered by [Regulation \(EU\) 2018/848](#). Please note that this regulation now sets stricter controls on these products. Your European partner must be able to provide detailed documentation to various control agencies at all times to demonstrate the organic integrity of imported products. Traceability of all the growing processes must be available to control authorities.

Tips:

Strive for residue-free chilli peppers, and certify your production as organic if possible. It will broaden your market opportunities, but remember that implementing organic production and becoming certified can be expensive and difficult in certain environments. You must be prepared to comply with the whole organic process.

Download the [actual list of control bodies and authorities](#) to see which certifiers are active in your region.

2. Through which channels can you get fresh chilli peppers on the European market?

Europe has a steady supply of regular chili peppers and a huge selection of unique, exotic chilies. These are sold by many specialised importers and wholesalers. The needs and features of these chilies vary just like the different companies that sell them.

How is the end market segmented?

The European chilli pepper market has a lot of variety because it serves different types of consumers. It can be split into two main groups: conventional and specialised or ethnic segments.

The conventional segment

The conventional segment is mostly made up of supermarkets, which mainly sell red cayenne chilli peppers from the *Capsicum Annuum* species. In some countries, they also offer local varieties like the Hungarian wax pepper in Eastern Europe, Pepperoncino in southern Italy, Piment d'Espelette in the French Basque region, and Padron and Ñora in Spain. Other types like Habanero, Jalapeño, or Madame Jeanette are available too, but they are more niche options for stores that want to provide a larger selection. Supermarkets prioritise what the products look like, low pesticide levels, and whether sustainable practices have been followed. If your European partner supplies supermarkets, he will most likely request at least Class I category products. Supermarkets also capitalise on niche products, so if you are supplying organic-certified chilli peppers you have a good chance of selling them to supermarkets or grocery stores. As a result, restaurants, Asian supermarkets, ethnic stores or event street markets will most likely buy Class I as well as Class II category chilli peppers because they are more interested in the taste than the appearance of the product.

The specialised or ethnic segment

On the other hand, the specialised or ethnic segment is much more varied. This includes restaurants, Asian supermarkets, specialised online shops, ethnic stores, and street vendors that cater to a wide range of customers with different tastes and backgrounds. In this segment, exotic chilli peppers are more common, but as people get used to them, they often make their way to regular stores. Here, the focus is mainly on the taste and freshness of the peppers, while things like certifications and appearance are not as crucial. The origin of the chilli pepper can also matter if it influences its flavour.

Figure 2: Segments and characteristics for fresh chilli peppers



Tips:

Try to maintain flexibility in your product offer in terms of quality and compliance with different requirements. A large part of the chilli peppers finds their way into the ethnic channels, but you need to keep the option open to sell in more conventional markets where demand for niche products is increasing as well.

Find out how the ethnic market functions and what it means to enter the European market for [exotic vegetables](#) on the CBI market information platform.

Through which channels do fresh chili peppers end up on the end market?

A large part of the chilli pepper demand is fulfilled by grower groups and service providers. For the more exotic varieties, the market depends on specialised importers and importing wholesalers.

Figure 3: European market channels for fresh chilli peppers



Source: [ICI Business](#)

Specialised importers form the main channel for chilli peppers

The main entrance to Europe is importers that specialise in exotic or ethnic vegetables. They have an important responsibility in fulfilling the demand for different types of chilli peppers, from common off-season chillies to the most exotic chilli peppers.

Importers manage supply chains from different origins and perform quality control. They are familiar with all the requirements of end clients and distribute to different European markets.

There is a wide variety of chilli pepper importers, in size, segment and product assortment. There are exotic specialists with chilli peppers such as [BUD Holland](#) and [Roveg](#) in the Netherlands, [CMR Group](#) in Spain, and [Neta](#) in France. Other importers have a stronger ethnic focus such as [Tropifruit](#) in the UK or [Belimpex](#) in the Netherlands.

Grower cooperation and grower groups are important for common chilli pepper varieties

An important channel for common chilli peppers (*Capsicum Annum*) are grower groups and cooperatives, such as [Hortamar](#) in Spain, that produce and supply a great part of the EU demand. These cooperatives often have a commercial extension that is responsible for the marketing and sales. Sometimes part of the production is outsourced to nearby countries such as Morocco to ensure a year-round supply.

There are also growers and cooperatives that produce exotic varieties. Among these are, for example, the [Unica Group](#) in Spain, and [Westland Peppers](#) in the Netherlands (also with production in Spain, Morocco and Israel).

Tip:

Activate the "Translation" function of your browser to make foreign websites available in your own language or change them to an English version.

Service providers provide access to supermarkets

In general, supermarkets want to buy as close to the source as possible, but they also want to be unburdened. The companies that have a direct relation with large supermarket chains, often present themselves as service providers. They organise the supply chain according to the needs of their clients, from sourcing to (re-)packing and branding. These service providers either source directly from the origin, or select specialised importers to find specific chilli pepper varieties. You can become part of this supply chain if you are able to offer the quality and logistics that a service provider requires.

Wholesalers (spot market)

The wholesale channels are crucial for the distribution of different chilli pepper varieties. Wholesalers often supply smaller quantities of exotic chillies to hospitality and food services, specialised fruit retailers and street markets. Ethnic wholesalers can have their own import and international contacts, such as [Punjab Exotic Foods](#) and [Sunnyfield Veg](#). Other wholesalers depend on a network of experienced importers. Typical wholesale markets include [Rungis in Paris](#), [New Spitalfields Market in London](#) and [Marcabarna in Barcelona](#).

Tips:

Offer several chilli pepper varieties to get interest from larger buyers. Importers in Europe usually import several types of chilli peppers. For buyers, combining shipments can be cost-effective and reduces the number of suppliers to deal with.

Browse on the websites of wholesale markets to find wholesalers that import chilli peppers. When you decide to visit a wholesale market, make sure to go early, as most of these markets operate in the (early) morning.

What is the most interesting channel for you?

There is a wide choice of companies you can approach. It makes sense to look what kind of chilli peppers a company has in its assortment when selecting potential buyers.

When starting up your export of chilli peppers you should start with smaller, specialised importers and importing wholesalers. This way, you can build a track record before reaching out to larger clients. Ethnic buyers and foreign-owned wholesalers may have the advantage of a cultural link with your country, and potentially operate in your language.

Larger exotic importers may provide better access to larger retail channels, but will also be more demanding with formalities and certifications. If you are able to join a larger group of growers in and around Europe, you can become part of a year-round supply programme.

Tip:

Visit trade fairs to find buyers. The most important trade fairs in Europe for fresh fruit and vegetables are [Fruit Logistica](#) in Berlin and the [Fruit Attraction](#) in Madrid. You can also find potential clients at the previously mentioned wholesale markets and their member lists.

3. What competition do you face on the European fresh chilli pepper market?

The European chilli market is highly competitive. Although there is a European production of chilli peppers, it is not enough to cover market demand. Europe relies heavily on imports from third countries to cover its needs. When you export your chilli peppers to the European market, you will face competition from a large number of countries. Depending on your target market, your products could face competition from Africa, the Middle East, Asia or even Europe. Your products need to be of good quality and comply with European health rules,

especially the ones about maximum residue levels (MRLs).

Which countries are you competing with?

Morocco and Türkiye are Europe's main suppliers of fresh chilli peppers. They accounted for approximately 85% of European imports in 2023. Their supply is supplemented with more exotic chilli varieties from countries such as Kenya, Rwanda, India and Senegal. The United Kingdom is one of the main importers of chillies from these smaller supply countries.

European chilli production is available during the summer. However, chilli pepper supplies from Morocco and Türkiye are available year-round.

Source: Eurostat and Trade Map 2024

Morocco: the largest third-country supplier of chilli peppers to Europe

Morocco is the largest third-country supplier of chilli peppers to Europe. In 2023, Morocco exported more than 28,000 tonnes to Europe. Its market share in the non-European supply in 2023 was 54% in the European Union (EU-27) and 30% in the United Kingdom (UK). France and Spain were the main destination countries, and in the UK the direct import increased significantly after BREXIT.

Morocco has several advantages that make it a serious competitor. Thanks to its proximity to European markets, Morocco can export large volumes by land. Its logistical costs are therefore less than those of competitors exporting chilli peppers by air. In the coming years, Morocco should continue to play a key role in supplying fresh chilli peppers to Europe because importers appreciate and rely on the quality of its exports.

Türkiye: steady increase of exports to eastern European markets

In 2023, Türkiye exported more than 25,000 tonnes of chilli peppers to Europe. Turkish chilli pepper exports accounted for 40% of European imports from third countries. The European countries that imported Turkish chilli peppers the most were Romania (55%), Austria (13%), UK (12%), Bulgaria (9%) and Germany (5%). Over the past five years, Türkiye has seen the biggest increase in chilli pepper exports. Their supply to Europe has doubled, from 12,600 in 2019 to 25,100 in 2023. Brexit and the United Kingdom contributed to the growth by importing larger volumes in 2021, 2022 and 2023.

Türkiye is a serious competitor for exporters targeting eastern European markets. Türkiye's chilli pepper should continue to improve in the coming years, thanks to the demand from eastern European markets.

The presence of Turkish chilli peppers on the European market is mainly price-based. Thanks to affordable production costs, Türkiye competes with European producers as well as long distance sources of chilli specialties such as Mexico. Türkiye has easier access to eastern European countries. This should allow the country to continue to play a key role in the supply of fresh chilli peppers to these countries over the coming years.

Kenya: supplier of special chilli varieties

The European fresh chilli import from Kenya seems minor compared to the supply from Morocco and Türkiye. However, trade figures show a growth from nearly 900 tonnes in 2019 to almost 1,900 tonnes in 2023. The United Kingdom imports about the same volume as the rest of Europe.

The strength of Kenya is its stable and warm climate, which allows the country to produce a wide range of quality chillies. Kenya produces not only Cayenne Pepper, but also Bird's Eye, Jalapeño, Serenade, Habanero and other varieties.

Rwanda: favourable climate for year-round production

Like Kenya, the climate in Rwanda is favourable for growing chilli peppers, such as Bird's Eye chillies and Habaneros. Production takes place year-round. Their supply to Europe more than doubled over the past five years to around 1,100 tonnes in 2023. Rwandan peppers are particularly popular in the UK, Germany and France.

Rwanda is a relatively new origin that has grown in experience over the last 5 to 10 years. With a strong local market and phytosanitary checks in place, Rwanda is in a good position to further develop its chilli production and export.

Europe: competes with seasonal and greenhouse chillies

Fresh chilli peppers are available between June and September. In the off-season, chilli peppers are imported or grown on a smaller scale in greenhouses. In the winter, there is a lower availability and greenhouse chillies become less competitive in price, which creates opportunities for supply countries with better climates. December to February are the best months for off-season supply.

Europe producers mainly grow chilli peppers of the *Capsicum Annuum* species, but more and more growers have started to cultivate other exotic varieties as well. This means there is more supply from local production, but traditional consumers sometimes still prefer the varieties grown in more tropical climates because of their specific taste and spiciness.

Spain, the Netherlands and Italy are the largest producers in Europe.

Tips:

Focus on the winter months to supply Europe with chilli peppers. This is the best period to be competitive in volumes and in price.

Target experienced buyers that understand the differences between chilli peppers from various regions. Especially for ethnic or traditional consumers, taste and spiciness are important features.

Which companies are you competing with?

Suppliers that successfully compete on the European market understand the importance of food safety and phytosanitary requirements. Your production and compliance have to be excellent to compete with companies that have integrated their supply with EU-based companies.

Morocco: a production available year-round

[Pepperworld](#) is a company established in the region of Souss Moussa, which is the region from which most of Morocco's top-quality products originate. Pepperworld is focused on meeting international quality requirements and has implemented several quality systems (BRCS, GLOBALGAP, IFS, SMETA) to guarantee customers that food safety and quality are of major concerns to them.

Aksun: available in a wide range of European markets

[Aksun](#) is a Turkish brand offering a wide variety of products among which chilli peppers. They supply their customers by land, sea and air. Türkiye's location on the Black Sea enables it to serve more than 50 different destinations. It produces and exports its chilli peppers to eastern as well as western European markets.

Tips:

Comply first with the strict health and phytosanitary requirements before organising your export to Europe. If you export a product that is not suitable for the EU market, it will not only cost you money, but you will jeopardise the export position of your country as well.

Define well your strengths as a company and your competitive advantage before entering the European market. You can differentiate on different levels, such as distance to the market, services, varieties, price and quality.

Which products are you competing with?

Chilli peppers are very popular for adding flavour to dishes. They face competition from dried ones and processed items like chilli powder, sauces, and curry pastes.

In Mediterranean countries such as Spain, dried chillies are often used because they last longer. Processed products are favoured in northern Europe for their convenience and shelf life. Although convenience is a challenge for fresh chillies, it cannot replace the aroma fresh chilli peppers bring to dishes.

Tips:

Make sure your fresh chilli pepper offers the consumer a unique taste and experience. Lots of consumers prefer a fresh product over a processed product, but you must be able to guarantee freshness.

Read the [CBI study on entering the market with dried chilli peppers](#), if you want to diversify your market.

4. What are the prices for fresh chilli peppers?

The prices for chilli peppers vary a lot, according to availability, variety and origin. In general, the more niche the chilli pepper, the higher the price. Temporary shortfalls in supply or demand can have a major impact on prices.

Chilli peppers can give a good return. But only fresh and clean chilli peppers have a market value. There are also specific factors that can easily increase the price for imported chilli peppers. For example, airfreight costs are usually around 2 to 2.5 euros per kilo, and much higher in recent times due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Physical inspections at the destination country in Europe can be as high as several hundred euros (for example in the Netherlands).

The margin of importers is usually 8% over the selling price plus handling costs. Because exotic chilli peppers are sold in minor volumes, importers often have a double role as wholesaler. Therefore, costs and margins are generally higher than for other regular vegetables.

The wholesale price for a Cayenne or Jalapeño pepper from Spain can be between 2.5 and 4 euros per kilo, while a Bird's eye chilli or Habanero from Eastern Africa can be between 6 and 10 euros per kilo. There is also a big

difference between a bulk product such as a sweet bell pepper and a much more exotic Bird's eye chilli pepper.

Consumer prices in Europe are generally between €0.20 and €0.80 per pepper (or €10–30 per kilo), but it depends heavily on the specific variety and retail outlet. Locally produced and common peppers may be sold for well below €10 per kilo. The price of a rare variety can be as much as €75 per kilo, such as the extremely hot, British grown '[Armageddon' chilli pepper introduced by Tesco in 2019](#).

Figure 5: Example of indicative price breakdown, in euro per kilo



Source: Industry sources and calculations

Tip:

Find a [price history in France on the Market News Network of FranceAgriMer](#) from producers, importers, wholesalers ("gros") and retail ("détail").

Thierry Paqui carried out this study in partnership with [ICI Business](#) on behalf of CBI.

Please review our [market information disclaimer](#).