

Exporting rambutan to Europe

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The European market for fresh rambutan is dominated by ethnic Asian consumers and specialty fruits and vegetables stores. Demand for specialty fruits is rising in many European countries, providing opportunities for exporters from developing countries.

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1. Product Definition

The rambutan (*Nephelium lappaceum*) is the fruit of trees from the genus Sapindaceae. The trees can reach a height of 25 metres. There are smaller cultivars as well, which make harvesting easier. The fruit is round to oval and 3 to 6 cm tall and 3 and 4 cm wide. It grows in bunches of 10 to 20 berries. The skin of the fruit is spinose and reddish. The fruit itself is white to pale pink and tastes sweet.

Rambutan is cultivated mainly in Southeast Asia and Latin American countries. Over a 100 species are grown commercially and ripened on the tree. The red-peel varieties are the most commonly found in European markets. The shelf life of fresh rambutan is limited and the produce bruises easily. Rambutan is closely related to lychee and longan.

Table 1: Combined Nomenclature (CN) commodity code for fresh rambutan

Number	Product
08109075	Fruit, tropical fresh, not specified elsewhere. Or: Fresh fruit, edible (excl. nuts, bananas, dates, figs, pineapples, avocados, guavas, mangoes, mangosteens, papaws `papayas`, tamarinds, cashew apples, jackfruit, lychees, sapodilla plums, passion fruit, carambola, pitahaya, citrus fruit, grapes, melons, apples, pears, quinces, apricots, cherries, peaches, plums, sloes, strawberries, raspberries, blackberries, mulberries, loganberries, black, white or red currants, gooseberries, cranberries, fruits of the genus Vaccinium, kiwifruit, durians, and persimmons)

Product specification

Quality

Imports of fresh rambutans from third countries to the EU must conform to general marketing standards for fresh fruits and vegetables. These standards adhere to the [CODEX Alimentarius Standard for rambutan](#) (CODEX STAN 246-2005). Products should be:

- intact, clean and sound;
- (practically) free from pests, damage, abnormal external moisture, internal browning;
- in a condition to withstand transport and handling.

The rambutans must have reached an appropriate degree of development and ripeness and in such a condition that enables them to withstand transport and arrive in satisfactory condition at the place of destination.

Rambutans are classified in three quality classes (see Codex Alimentarius Standard for rambutan): “Extra Class”, “Class I”, “Class II”:

- Extra Class rambutans are products of superior quality. Extra Class produce is free of defects, with the exception of very slight superficial defects. Superficial defects must not affect the general appearance of the produce, the quality, the keeping quality, and presentation in the package.
- Class I rambutans are of good quality that can only contain slight defects: a slight defect in shape; slight skin defects not exceeding 5% of the total surface area, excluding defects on spinterns.
- Rambutans that satisfy the minimum requirements, but do not qualify for Class I or Extra Class can enter the EU market classified as “Class II”. Class II rambutans may have defects in shape or skin not exceeding 10% of the total surface area, excluding defects on spinterns. However, the market for Class II produce is very limited. The defects must not, in any case, affect the flesh of the produce.

Rambutan is best stored at 8°C to 15°C with 90% to 95% relative humidity to achieve a storage life of 2-3 weeks. There may be changes in the skin and spine coloration after storage, but the flesh is unaffected. Exposure to higher or lower temperatures results in rapid loss of quality. Large volume shipments of rambutan rarely occur and air freight is common: within 24 hours after harvest, and preferably with refrigeration.

Size and colour

According to the CODEX Alimentarius standard for rambutan, size is determined by the number of fruits per kilogram, or the weight per fruit.

Table 2: Codex Alimentarius size specifications of rambutans

	Presented as single fruit		Presented in bunches
Size Code	Weight per Fruit (grams)	Number of Fruits per Kg	Number of Fruits per Kg
1	>43	<23	<29
2	38 - 43	23 - 26	29 - 34
3	33 - 37	27 - 30	35 - 40

4	29 - 32	31 - 34	41 - 45
5	25 - 28	35 - 40	-
6	18 - 24	41 - 50	-

- Size tolerance is 10% by number or weight of rambutans corresponding to the indication on the package.
- Skin and spine colouration is the main indication of maturity. Fruits with green skin and greenish-red spines are sour. Rambutans should have red or yellow skin and spines, depending on the variety.

Packaging

Wholesale packaging:

- Rambutans are usually sold in two- to four-kilo cardboard boxes, depending on the importer's preferences. Sometimes fruit are pre-packed in plastic trays (punnets) or clamshells. Single rambutans should be packed loosely, arranged lying down in one or two layers. Larger boxes may be used as well, especially if produce is repacked in Europe. Be sure to check the desired packaging with your customer.
- The contents of each package must be uniform and contain only rambutans of the same origin, variety or varietal type, quality, size, colour and maturity. The visible part of the contents of the package must be representative of the entire contents.
- The containers shall meet the usual quality, hygiene, ventilation, and resistance characteristics for ensuring the rambutans' suitable handling, shipping, and preservation. Packages (or lot for produce presented in bulk) must be free of all foreign matter and odour.

Consumer packaging:

- Fresh rambutans are sold either right out of the wholesale box or in pre-packed punnets of different sizes.

Rambutans are offered individually or in bunches. In the first case, the pedicel must be detached at the first knot and the maximum length must not extend more than 5 mm beyond the top of the fruit. In the case of bunches, each bunch must be free of leaves and have a number of clusters, each cluster with a minimum of two rambutans. The stem of each bunch must not exceed 20 cm in length measured from the attachment of the highest fruit.

Labelling

Consumer package labelling must be in accordance with the rules and regulations applicable in the EU and EFTA market. To protect the EU consumers' right to access useful and appropriate information, [Regulation \(EU\) No. 1169/2011](#) establishes the general principles, requirements, and responsibilities governing food information, and in particular food labelling. Labels cannot contain any toxic ink or glue.

Each package (non-retail package) must bear the following particulars, in letters grouped on the same side, legibly and indelibly marked, and visible from the outside:

- Identification: Name and address of exporter, packer and/or dispatcher. Identification code (optional);
- The nature of the product: Name of the produce "Rambutan" if the contents are not visible from the outside. Name of the variety or commercial type (optional). "Bunch" specification, when applicable;
- Origin of product: Country of origin and (optional) district where grown or national, regional or local place name;
- Commercial identification: class, size (code), and/or net weight;
- Official Inspection Mark (optional).

In addition, for retail packaging, if the produce is not visible from the outside, each package shall be labelled with the name of the produce "Rambutan" and may also be labelled with the name of the variety or varietal

type. Any certification logo or retailer logo may be on the labelling if requested, in the case of private label products.

2. What is the demand for fresh rambutan fruit in Europe?

General information and figures about production and trade developments in the European market for fresh fruit and vegetables are provided on the [CBI Market Intelligence Platform](#).

Specific data about the trade in rambutans is not available. This section provides you with more detailed statistics of production, trade, and consumption of tropical fruit with HS code 08109075, which includes rambutan. See also the *product definition* above. Note that rambutan is a very small part within this product group. Pomegranate is one of the main products within the category.

Import

Interpretations and opportunities

- The total average annual size of the European import market for fresh rambutans can be estimated between 500 and 1,500 tonnes in recent years. The value is estimated at approximately €4 million. The market for rambutans has potential to grow due to an increasing interest in exotic fruit, but figures about market volumes are difficult to collect. However, there are also limitations in the international development of rambutans, mainly because of the difficulty in handling and the short shelf life, resulting in a relatively high-priced fruit.
- Rambutans are mainly imported from:
 - Thailand
 - Malaysia
 - the Philippines
 - Indonesia
 - Vietnam
- Other new or counter-seasonal suppliers include:
 - Ecuador
 - Honduras
 - Guatemala
 - Sri Lanka
 - Madagascar
 - and a few other countries in tropical East Africa.
- Rambutans are available on the European market year-round. However, the bulk of supplies comes between November and March especially for the holiday season and the Chinese New Year. Malaysia is supplying mainly in December and January, and in May and June. The Philippines supply rambutans between March and July, and in October and November. Vietnamese rambutan are supplied year-round.
- In general, the EU applies an 8.8% import duty on rambutans, but there is a list of countries to which different tariff schemes are applied — check the [TARIC taxation database](#). Because rambutans are already a relatively expensive exotic fruit, suppliers that have access to lower-cost air freight have an important competitive advantage.
- Rambutans are a very perishable product. Combined with the high quality requirements of European buyers, selecting only the best quality produce and excellent logistics is a key prerequisite for exporting to Europe.
- Importers of rambutans are mainly specialised exotic fruit importers. The Netherlands is one of the main entrance ports into Europe.
- The import of tropical and exotic fruit from developing countries is increasing. Although the European market volume is small, a gradual increase in market volumes is anticipated as consumers are looking for new and special fruits that fit into a healthy diet.

Tips:

- Inquire about a potential buyer's demand, both in terms of volume as well as quality, before sending any shipments. The market may easily be oversupplied.
- Build strong relationships with your customers to get the latest information on demand and profit from (temporary) shortfalls in supply.
- Check publications of [FRuiTrop](#) and [Cirad](#), as well as news sites such as [Freshplaza](#) to get more details on the economic development of rambutans.

Interpretations and opportunities

European exports of tropical fresh fruit without specific product codes are dominated by Spain and the Netherlands. The Netherlands is an important re-exporter of exotic fruits and is responsible for a large part of the re-exported rambutans. Specialist importers in the Netherlands also repack and re-export rambutans destined for Germany, Scandinavian countries and other countries in Europe.

Although Spain scores high in the statistics, it is not a large exporter of rambutan. Spain is a producer and exporter of pomegranates, which is part of the same statistical product group as rambutan. The actual export share of Spain in rambutan is close to zero. The same is true for Greece.

The main destination countries of fresh tropical fruit such as rambutan are Germany, Italy and France. For rambutan specifically, France is a growing and important end market. France is also one of the main importing countries of lychees, a similar fruit to rambutan.

Tip:

- Find an importer in the Netherlands or Belgium. Importers in these countries are the main entrance points into Europe for exotic fruit and can open a much larger market.

Production

Interpretations and opportunities

- Total world production of rambutans is difficult to assess. Official figures do not exist for most countries. According to [Cirad](#), Indonesia produces some 60–100 thousand tonnes (2014) and Thailand 450 thousand tonnes (2014). Almost all fresh rambutans are consumed locally and only a small fraction is exported.
- The main production countries are Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, and tropical countries in Africa, the Caribbean islands, Central America (Honduras, Costa Rica, Guatemala, and Mexico), and Ecuador, where the fruit is called achotillo. Guatemala, Honduras and Australia are relatively new countries, which increasingly grow rambutan for export. The production in Central America and Mexico is mainly destined for the North American market.
- Rambutan is an important smallholder crop in Indonesia, where the fruit is a common crop in Sumatra, Java, West Kalimantan, and Sulawesi, and the humid parts of Nusa Tenggara (Lombok and Flores). Rambutan is an important part of rural nutrition in Indonesia.
- Rambutan is the third most important fruit crop in Thailand after durian and mangosteen. The area of rambutan production in Thailand was about 99 thousand hectares in 2010 and decreased to some 53 thousand hectares in 2012. Production was estimated at about 400,000 tonnes ([Office of Agricultural Economics-Thailand](#), 2012) and increased towards 450,000 tonnes in 2014 ([Cirad](#)). Only about 1 or 2% of the

fruit is exported. The main export destinations for fresh rambutans from Thailand are Vietnam, United Arab Emirates, Malaysia, China, and Japan, as well as Europe.

- In some areas such as Malaysia, rambutan trees can bear fruit twice annually, once in June and with a shorter season ending in December. In other areas like Costa Rica, there is a single fruit season, with the start of the rainy season in April stimulating flowering and the fruit is usually ripe in August and September.

Tip:

- Only export the highest quality of rambutans and maintain both an excellent cold chain and careful handling to improve shelf life. European buyers only select the best quality produce.

Consumption

Interpretations and opportunities

- Data about rambutan consumption in Europe is not available. While consumers in Indonesia eat about 4 kilograms of rambutans per year, average European consumption per capita does not exceed a few grams. To most people of European origin, rambutans are a relatively unknown fruit.
- Rambutan is a fruit that is mainly consumed by ethnic Asians, although a growing number of European consumers are looking for specialty fruits. Quantities sold are limited, although specialty fresh fruit stores, open air markets, and ethnic food stores commonly include fruits like rambutan in their assortment.
- Consumers in Nordic and Western European countries are more open to specialty fruits in the short run than consumers in eastern parts of Europe. Southern European consumers eat more tropical fruit than other European consumers, but they tend to focus more on locally produced fruit.

Tip:

- Increase sales of rambutans in Europe with promotional activities and product information.

3. What trends offer opportunities on the European market for fresh rambutans?

[CBI Trend mapping](#) provides you with general trends in the European market for fresh fruits and vegetables. This section provides more details about specific trends in the market for fresh rambutans.

Growing interest in sustainable fruit: Consumption of fresh fruit in Europe is developing towards a more sustainable approach to production and processing. Environmental and social issues are becoming more and more important. Social and environmental certification schemes include actions to strongly reduce and register the use of pesticides, take action on the safety of employees and/or even include price guarantees for producers. Certification schemes that are in line with the [Global Social Compliance Program \(GSCP\)](#) will have a higher chance of being accepted by European supermarkets.

Because fresh rambutans are imported by air, the greenhouse gas emission and CO₂-footprint of the product is relatively high. Although consumers are not always aware of it, your buyer is likely to give it more importance in its ambition for sustainable fruit.

Tips:

- Check the [Global Social Compliance Program \(GSCP\)](#) website for more information about social and environmental conduct.

- Assess the performance of your company and your suppliers and learn about social compliance certification labels in the [Standards Map database](#).

Attention to health food: Consumers in Europe are becoming more aware of health issues and pay more attention to their diet. Rambutans are known for being a healthy fruit. Since European consumers embrace healthy and tasty fruits, health benefits can be the main drivers for market success.

Tip:

- Communicate the health benefits of the fruit to help expand the European market. Be aware of [European Legislation on food health claims](#).

Organic niche: Thanks to the increased attention to health and environment, there is also a growing interest in organically produced fruit and vegetables. Organic rambutan is a niche within a niche, but the combination can be very profitable. There are specialized importers of exotic fruit and organic produce.

Tips:

- Before investing in organic agriculture, verify first with your buyer the possibilities for supplying organic exotic fruit.
- Find specialized importers that have experience with fresh organic fruit through online databases such as [Organic-Bio](#).
- Read more about the principles of organic agriculture on the [website of IFOAM Organics International](#).

Taste is important: European consumers want tropical exotic fruit to be ripe when bought, so that the fruit can be eaten immediately after purchase. Exotic fruit is generally expensive, thus increasing the importance of taste. The taste of rambutans should be sweet, while the texture of the fruit is firm.

Tips:

- Make sure that supply chain logistics and transport processes do not affect product taste in any significant way.
- Find the right varieties with the preferred taste for the destination market of your choice.
- Discuss with your buyer how to adopt the right mix of certificates, varieties, and ripeness during transport, for your tropical fruit.

Growing demand for exotic products: In general, there is a growing market for niche products in Europe. Rambutan exports can benefit from this trend, provided that the products are marketed well. Attention to the healthiness, special culinary value of the produce, and a fair trade character, will help increase consumption.

Tip:

- Offer rambutans with instructions on how to store and prepare them, include for example home recipes. Many European consumers are prepared to try 'new' products. Health, ease-of-use, price, and

enjoyment are important principles that form the basis of consumer purchases.

4. What requirements should fresh rambutans comply with to be allowed on the European market?

Buyer requirements can be divided into (1) musts, requirements you must meet in order to enter the market, such as legal requirements, (2) common requirements, which are those most of your competitors have already implemented, in other words, the ones you need to comply with in order to keep up with the market, and (3) niche market requirements for specific segments.

For general information see also the buyer requirements for fresh fruit and vegetables on the [CBI Market Intelligence Platform for fresh fruit and vegetables](#).

Requirements you must meet

Pesticides

Pesticide residues are one of the crucial issues for fruit and vegetable suppliers. To avoid health and environmental damage, the European Union has set maximum residue levels (MRLs) for pesticides in and on food products. Products containing more pesticides than allowed will be withdrawn from the European market.

Note that buyers in several Member States such as the UK, Germany, The Netherlands and Austria, use MRLs which are stricter than the MRLs laid down in European legislation.

Tips:

- To find out the MRLs that are relevant for rambutan, use the [EU MRL database](#) in which all harmonised MRLs can be found. You can search on your product or pesticide used and the database shows the list of the MRLs associated to your product or pesticide. Read more about the [EU legislation on MRLs](#) on the website of the European Commission.
- 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.
- Always check with your buyers if they have additional requirements on MRLs and pesticide use.

Plant Health

Fruits and vegetables exported to Europe must comply with the EU legislation on plant health. The European Union has laid down [phytosanitary requirements](#) to prevent introduction and spread of organisms harmful to plants and plant products in the EU. The requirements mainly imply that:

- Certain listed organisms are not allowed to be imported into Europe, unless specific circumstances apply. Control measures are subject to change.
- Plants or plant products specified in Part B, Annex V of the Plant Health Directive [2000/29/EC](#) must be accompanied by a plant health certificate. A model phytosanitary certificate can be found through Annex VII of the Plant Health Directive.

Tips:

- Check with the relevant [National Plant Protection Organisation](#) (NPPO) or your importer what the requirements are for your product.

- Read more about [plant health](#) in the EU Trade Helpdesk.

Contaminants

Contaminants are substances that have not been intentionally added to food, but which may be present as a result of the various stages of its production, packaging, transport or warehousing. To avoid negative impact on the quality of food and risks to human health, the European Union has set limits for several contaminants.

Tips:

- Find the relevant contaminant levels in the annex of [Regulation \(EC\) 1881/2006](#). All contaminants are presented and maximum levels are provided per product or groups of products.
- Check the European Commission's factsheet on food contaminants "[Managing food contaminants: how the EU ensures that our food is safe](#)" and read more about the [legislation concerning contaminants](#) on the website of the European Commission.

Control of food imported to the EU

To ensure food safety and avoid environmental damage, the EU has restricted the use of certain chemicals in several Regulations and Directives. Your products will be subjected to official controls. These controls are carried out to ensure that all foods marketed in the EU market are safe, i.e. in compliance with the requirements applicable to them. There are three types of checks:

- a) Documentary checks
- b) Identity checks
- c) Physical checks

In the event of repeated non-compliance of specific products originating from particular countries, the EU can decide that controls will be carried out on an increased level or lay down emergency measures. Controls can be carried out at all stages of import and marketing in the EU. However, most checks are done at the points of entry in the EU.

Switzerland, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein are not EU members, but are part of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA). Their food laws are to a large extent identical with EU legislation. However, some aspects of legislation may differ. In Switzerland, import checks are the responsibility of the [Swiss Customs Administration](#) and the [Federal Office of Public Health](#).

Tips:

- Familiarise yourself with the procedures before planning your exports to the EU. Failure to follow the right procedures could cause decrease and delay of orders, increase costs and result in actions by EU enforcement authorities.
- Make sure that the accompanying documents correspond (from A-Z!) with the food products contained in the consignment.
- Read more about [health control in the EU Trade Helpdesk](#).
- Consult the [EU Trade Helpdesk](#) for a full list of requirements for tropical exotic fruit, including rambutan, selecting the product code: 08109075

Common buyer requirements

Certification as guarantee

As food safety is a top priority in all EU food sectors, you can expect most buyers to request extra guarantees from you in form of certification. [GlobalG.A.P.](#) is the most commonly requested food safety certification scheme, essential for exporting rambutans to the EU, especially via supermarkets. GLOBALG.A.P is a pre-farm-gate standard that covers the whole agricultural production process, from before the plant is in the ground to the non-processed product (processing not covered).

Examples of other food safety management systems that can be required are:

- [BRC](#) (British Retail Consortium)
- [IFS](#) (International Food Standard)
- [FSSC22000](#) (Food Safety System Certification)
- [SQF](#) (Safe Quality Food Programme)

These management systems are additional to GLOBALG.A.P. and recognised by the [Global Food Safety Initiative \(GFSI\)](#).

Tips:

- Anticipate for strict requirements. For exotics like rambutan, GLOBALG.A.P. is becoming a requirement for most buyers to show good entrepreneurship and trustworthiness of your company.
- Read more on the different Food Safety Management Systems at the [Standards Map](#).
- As food safety is a major issue; work proactively with buyers to improve food safety and be transparent and up-to-date with buyer requirements and regulations.

Quality standards

The General EU Marketing Standards also apply to rambutans. EU buyers often require compliance with the standards of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe ([UNECE](#)) or the [Codex Alimentarius Commission](#) (CAC). It should be noted that quality refers to both food safety and food quality.

As rambutans are harvested ripe and deteriorate fast after harvesting, cold storage, good packaging, and cold chain transportation are very important. Experiments have shown that by choosing optimal packaging and controlling the cold chain, shelf life can be greatly improved. Good handling of the products is necessary to assure the optimal initial quality and the maximum shelf life of rambutans. Gentle handling during harvest and transport minimises mechanical damages and avoids any enzymatic decays of fruits.

Tips:

- Make sure you supply the quality as agreed in the product specifications and discuss with your buyer which additional certificates are required. These requirements vary between countries and market segments.
- Pay much attention to an effective post-harvest chain, including cold storage.
- Work together with other exporters and producers in order to increase the export potential of rambutan from your country and to meet EU buyer requirements in terms of high quality, packaging and timely delivery.
- Apply sustainable production methods. Organising production of small farms in a producer

organisation can help to overcome some of the organisational difficulties of limiting the environmental impact of production.

- Improve your market chances by securing an experienced importer with a focus on sustainability and involving him in your supply chain organisation.

Social and environmental compliance

There is growing attention in Europe for the social and environmental conditions in producing areas. Most European buyers have a social code of conduct which they expect suppliers to adhere to.

Important ways to prove yourself as a responsible supplier are through:

- [GRASP](#), a social add-on of GLOBALG.A.P. and an accessible certification that is gaining importance in Europe.
- [SMETA](#), which stands for the Sedex Members Ethical Trade Audit. SMETA was developed by the non-profit member organisation of Sedex with the objective to facilitate the exchange of information on social compliance.

You increase your chances by implementing standards that are recognised by the [Sustainability Initiative Fruit and Vegetables](#) (SIFAV), which consists of an initiative from traders and retailers to become 100% sustainable in sourcing fresh produce from Latin America, Africa and Asia by 2020.

Tips:

- Examine your company's current social performance, for example by completing a self-assessment on the [amfori/BSCI website](#).
- For a complete overview of buyer initiatives for social compliance, see the [buyer requirements for fresh fruit and vegetables](#) on the CBI marketing intelligence platform.

Niche markets: Organic and fair-trade requirements

Organic, a growing niche market

An increasing number of EU consumers prefer food products that are produced and processed by natural methods. The market for organic rambutans is still small, but with a growing demand and limited supply.

In order to market organic products in Europe, you have to use organic production methods according to [European legislation](#) and apply for an organic certificate with an accredited certifier. Furthermore, you have to use these production methods for at least two years before you can market the fruits and vegetables as organic.

After being audited by an accredited certifier, you may put the EU organic logo on your products, as well as the logo of the standard holder such as the [Soil Association](#), which is especially relevant in the UK, [Naturland](#) from Germany or [Bio Suisse](#) from Switzerland. Some of these standards are slightly different, but they all comply with the EU legislation on organic production and labelling.

Tips:

- Implementing organic production and becoming certified can be expensive, so assess the market potential before making any investments.
- Consult the [Standards Map database](#) for the different organic certifications.
- For the export of organic rambutans into the European market, use a competent and specialised

importer, who understands the market and knows the way into niche markets with their particular requirements.

Fair trade

The demand for fair-trade certification in the fresh fruit business in general has been replaced by other social compliance schemes as described above. But if your production of rambutan is supplied by a large number of small growers, it can be interesting to explore the potential niche markets for fair-trade certified fruit.

Examples of social or sustainable labels for fresh fruit and vegetables are [Fairtrade](#) and [Fair for Life](#).

Tip:

- Consult the [Standards Map database](#) for more information and for differences between fair trade labels.

5. What is the competition like in the European rambutan market?

This section provides information about the market competitiveness of the European market for rambutans.

Company competition

- Worldwide production of rambutans is volatile and supplies to the European market varied a great deal in the past. Temporary oversupply has a big impact on prices. In the last few years, prices of Rambutan have been relatively stable, as there are not many new suppliers of rambutans entering the market.
- The majority of fresh rambutans in the European retail channels are sold through specialist grocery stores and ethnic (Asian) stores. These shops may be less powerful than large supermarket retail chains, but still demand only the best quality.
- Rambutans are placed in a high market segment due to their exclusivity and price. Because of this, you can expect extra attention will be paid to MRLs, quality during harvest and shipping and corporate social responsibility (e.g. working conditions). Supply chain transparency and information sharing are also becoming increasingly more important. Long-term partnerships are sought by European buyers to ensure product supply and quality.
- Thailand and Vietnam are believed to be the biggest suppliers of rambutans, especially in the peak season from May to August. However, thanks to different micro climates in Southeast Asia growers can almost achieve a year-round supply. Farmers in Central American countries such as Guatemala and Honduras claim to have [increased their production and export to Europe](#), but this cannot be confirmed by the trade statistics.

Market entry

- Certification and meeting both legal and non-legal requirements form a major hurdle for producers and exporters wishing to enter the European market. Certification applies to good agricultural practices, legal requirements mainly to MRLs, plant health issues, and food safety. For fresh rambutan, the quality of the fruit is one of the major issues: shelf life, colour, taste.

Product competition

- In the last decade the diversity of fruit and vegetables supplied to the European market has increased. Exotic tropical fruits compete with other fruits, but can also complement them. They are distinguished by a higher price, a more exclusive image and perceived health benefits.
- Fresh rambutans experience competition mainly from lychees, longan, and similar fruit, but also from other

special exotic fruit like star fruit, sharon fruit, and dragon fruit (pitahaya). In addition, fresh rambutans face competition of preserved lychees and rambutan (cans and jars).

Tips:

- Plan your supply of rambutan carefully according market demand. Rambutan is a specialty product and volumes in the market are small.
- Build partnerships with buyers and strive for excellent product quality and handling, but avoid pricing competition.
- Establish a credible track record including transparent information on your company and product quality. Being part of a stable partnership and being a trustworthy supplier can help you to establish and maintain your position on the market.
- Use storytelling (e.g. show its origin and producer), novel packaging and premium quality as methods for setting your product apart.

6. What do the trade channels and interesting market segments look like in Europe for fresh rambutans?

This section provides information about the various marketing channels through which fresh rambutan are marketed in Europe.

Figure 5: Market channels for fresh rambutan in the European market



Interpretations and opportunities

Specialised importers: Fresh rambutans are a typical specialty fruit for the European market. Specialised importers buy a whole range of exotics fruits from different countries and redistribute these to wholesalers and other customers in different European countries. In typical trade hubs such as the Netherlands and Belgium there are various importers that have built expertise in the trade of new exotic fruits, including rambutans.

Importers/distributors differ in their relationship with the retail sector. Some are suppliers for private label products; others have their own brand, while others market the brand of a producer (cooperation).

Regional differences in market channels for tropical fruit: In Europe, there are differences between the compositions of market channels. The retail landscape in the south and east of Europe is often more traditional. Northern countries like Germany, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and Belgium have a very dominant retail channel and tropical fruit is sold by large supermarkets. France and Spain go beyond that with large hypermarkets, alongside smaller specialist shops. Countries in the Alpine region, such as Switzerland and Austria, are more favourably disposed towards small local shops.

Ethnic market: Economic globalisation, increased ethnic diversity in Europe and a greater demand for healthy and more diverse food products have opened a window of opportunity for the commercial production and marketing of tropical fruit, including rambutan. For rambutan, the ethnic Asian population is important. European consumers are gradually becoming more familiar with Asian and other cuisines. This increases the market for rambutan, as supermarkets and green grocers are offering a wider variety of exotic fruit to cater to this trend.

Ethnic fruit stores and specialist shops are important retail outlets for rambutans, more so than for other types of tropical fruit. For rambutans, the ethnic Asian population is important. Other consumers are also gradually becoming more familiar with Asian and other cuisines. Therefore, the food service industry, i.e. restaurants and catering, is also an important market channel for rambutan.

Food service and out of home: The out-of-home markets, i.e. restaurants, are also an important destination for fresh rambutans, especially Asian restaurants. Such restaurants frequently buy tropical fruit from specialty wholesalers, although general wholesale outlets such as Sligro in the Netherlands also sell tropical fruits, including rambutans.

Tips:

- Find a European importer by presenting yourself at trade fairs such as [Fruit Logistica](#). All of the different channels start with a strong relationship with a European partner.
- Choose the importer, based on the size of your company or market strategy.
- Maintain a high-quality product. Low-quality produce may be rejected by end consumers. Supermarkets, but also specialist shops, are increasingly paying attention to the quality of rambutan, which may result in rejection or penalties if the agreed quality level is not met.

7. What are end market prices for fresh rambutan?

Figure 6: Price breakdown for fresh rambutans



Prices are generally somewhat higher in Scandinavian countries such as Sweden and Norway and somewhat lower in the Netherlands and Belgium, as well as in Southern and Eastern European countries. Wholesale prices of air-shipped rambutans from Thailand and Vietnam usually vary between 7 and 9 euro per kilogram.

Retail prices vary around 18 to 22 euros per kilo, depending on the availability and quality. Rambutans are not always available in supermarkets.

Figure 7: Example consumer prices



[VersBestellen.nl](#), Online shop, the Netherlands, Rambutan 250g, 5,10 euro



[Tesco](#), Supermarket, United Kingdom, Rambutan 150g 2,80 euro

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