



Producer country sheet

Green beans in Morocco

by Cécilia Céleyrette

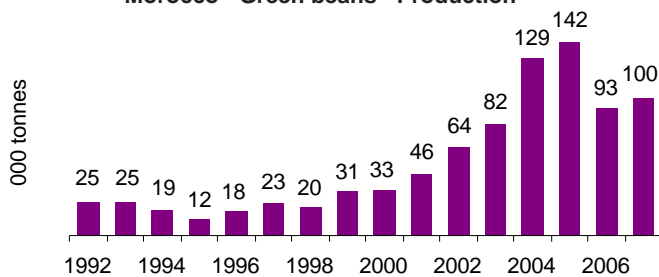
It has taken Morocco about a decade to become a major contributor in the green bean market, thanks to economic and logistic advantages that make it very competitive with regard to its African competitors. Production was initially in northern Morocco and then shifted to the south (the Souss) with the sole aim of developing flows to the European market. Production has increased five-fold in ten years. Green beans are the second largest export vegetable after tomatoes. The greater part of the crop is for the European market—especially Spain and France—but shipments to the northern European markets are now developing as well.



Production zones

Two main categories of green beans are grown in Morocco: flat Helda beans and the French or filet (needle) beans. The latter are well-suited to the variety of climatic conditions in the country and grown for export in two zones in particular. Thus 80% of production is in the Souss-Massa region and 11% in the Rabat-Salé zones. Farmers generally grow two crops with yields of 15 tonnes per ha. Extra-fine filet beans are grown near Rabat (Skhirat), while the crop in the Souss-Massa region (Agadir) consists mainly of Bobby beans because of heat and transport time. Most green bean production is in open fields (2 080 ha, that is to say 4 000 ha counting two cycles) while 260 ha is under glass. Helda is grown practically only in the Souss-Massa region (98%) with 80% in greenhouses. The area devoted to the latter variety totals over 1 800 ha with an average of one and a half cycles per year and yields of 25 to 30 tonnes per ha. However, development is slowed by problems of water resources and the availability of land in the Souss-Massa region.

Morocco - Green beans - Production



Source : FAO

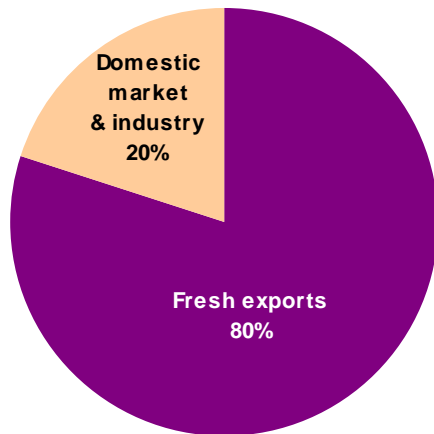
Production

The bean crop has increased very rapidly in Morocco, making it the second largest producer country in the world after Kenya. Harvest figures increased from 20 000 tonnes in the 1990s to more than 100 000 tonnes in the 2003-04 season. The crop seems to be marking time at the moment, in particular as a result of poor weather conditions that have reduced potential production. In addition, growers are also focusing on other high value-added crops such as garden peas (2 600 ha) and mangetout peas (60 ha).

Production calendar and varieties

The main varieties grown in Morocco are either dwarf varieties grown in open fields or poly tunnels or climbing varieties suitable for greenhouses. Most green bean production is in open fields with two cycles, making it possible to cover practically the whole year, with varieties such as 'Polysta' for Bobby beans and 'Venta' for fine and very fine French beans. It is noted that growers use the same varieties for fine, very fine and even extra-fine beans. The Helda bean segment is dominated by the three varieties 'Estefania', 'Oriente' and 'Dona'.

Green beans — Morocco — Production calendar												
	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A
French beans												
Helda beans												



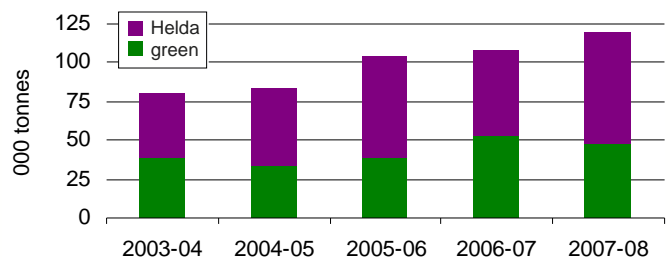
Outlets

A large proportion of production is exported. The figures are 80% of green beans and 100% white beans. Thus only small volumes go to the domestic market or are processed.

Total exports

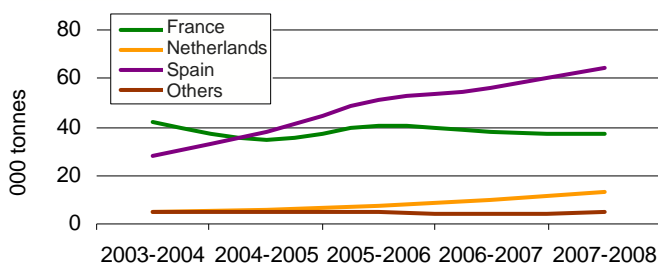
Green bean exports have increased strongly at the end of the present decade, quickly reaching 30 000 tonnes. However, after general enthusiasm among importers, the distribution of this fragile produce now tends to be concentrated in the hands of specialists. Imports now vary between 50 000 and 60 000 tonnes, practically all of which is shipped to the European market. The French market share is comparatively stable at 25 000 to 30 000 tonnes. Spain is Morocco's second-largest customer but tonnages of green beans fluctuate considerably. In contrast, shipments to the Netherlands are still increasing (4 100 t in 2003-04 and 10 200 tonnes in 2007-08) at the expense of African sources and Egypt. Shipments of Helda beans have practically doubled in the last five years, reaching 72 000 tonnes in 2007-08, of which 80% was shipped to the Spanish market.

Morocco - Green beans - Exports



Source : EACCE

Morocco - Green beans - Exports by destination



Source : EACCE

Logistics

This produce is very delicate and must reach its destination as soon as possible. It is shipped either by air (extra-fine) or by refrigerated lorry. In the latter case, it is recommended that the conditions should be 4°C with 95% relative humidity as if the temperature is higher or lower or fluctuates the beans turn brown, first at the tips and then all over. Furthermore, it is recommended that green beans should not be transported in the same lorry as tomatoes or other produce that do not have the same temperature and relative humidity requirements. When conservation conditions are very favourable, quality is not lost for four or five days. Transport by lorry takes two to three days via Tanger to the Perpignan wholesale market.