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Date: 12/3/2015

GAIN Report Number: IT1594

Greece

Post: Rome

Planting Seeds Market in Greece

Report Categories:

Agricultural Situation

Planting Seeds

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Report Highlights:

Greece's certified planting seeds market shows good potential for future development. The current planting seed market value in MY 2014/15 is \$180 million, with vegetable seeds and grains holding 73.9 percent of the market. Greece is a net importer of planting seeds. In the last five years the average planting seed imports value amounted to \$68 million. While much of the planting material is sourced from European Union countries, other countries such as Israel, Turkey, China, and the United States also are suppliers.

General Information:**General Information:**

Small farms and low capital investment characterize Greek agriculture. Greece's utilized agricultural area is close to 5 million hectares, of which 57 percent is in the plains and 43 percent is in mountainous or semi-mountainous areas. An estimated 65 percent of the land under cultivation is used for arable crops, while 25 percent is used for tree plantations, and the remaining 10 percent for pastures and vineyards. The number of individual agricultural holdings is estimated at about 710,000. Thus, the average area per holding is slightly less than 6.8 hectares.

Greek domestic production of seed (farm seed, vegetable seed, and lawn seed) is limited when compared to imported seed, based on value and volume. Private companies provide most domestic seed production, leaving the rest of production to government organizations and institutions. In Greece, there are approximately 65 grain seed producing companies; 15 for vegetable seeds; 15 for fiber; and 40 for forage and legumes seeds. KESPY is the Central Cooperative Union of seeds offering seeds at economical prices, but most Greek farmers either use their own seed or if they are going to purchase seeds, they do so from private companies who can offer the latest performance traits.

According to the Greek Ministry of Rural Development and Food the area dedicated to planting seeds reached approximately 22,000 hectares (ha) in 2014, with a total output of 44,000 tons (MT) of certified seed. The Greek National Register of Agricultural Plant Varieties includes 548 field crop and 297 vegetable varieties. All hybrids in Greece are imported - none are produced locally.

Seed Production in Greece, in 2014

Crop	Area (ha)	Certified Seed Production (MT)
Durum wheat	8,712	28,432
<i>Vicia sativa</i>	5,675	1,360
Cotton	2,652	5,138
Barley	2,353	4,483
Alfalfa	852	70
Soft wheat	746	2,220
Peas	301	363
Potatoes	237	789
Triticale	166	503
Oats	114	169
<i>Vicia faba</i>	106	85
Chick peas	67	83
Lentils	46	44
Corn	42	71
Sugar Beets	27	4
Soya	6	12

Source: Greek Ministry of Rural Development and Food

A study from the Pan-Hellenic Confederation of Agricultural Cooperative Unions (PASEGES) shows that in 2014, imported seeds had a 35 percent market share valued at \$106.2 million, down 16.8 percent compared to 2013. Greek seed sales in MY 2014/15 reached \$180 million, with vegetable seeds accounting for 37.3 percent of the market (mostly tomato, potato, onion, and cucumbers), followed by grains other than corn (durum wheat; soft wheat; barley; oats; and triticale but excluding corn) with a 21.5 percent market share, and corn with 13.8 percent of the market. Greece remains the leading EU cotton producer, but cotton seed accounted for only 10.9 percent of the market in MY 2014/15 (slightly less than \$20 million), mainly due to a shift in production to durum wheat as a result in a shift in support payments.

Crops	MY 2013/14 Sales (million dollars)	Market share (percent)
Vegetables (incl. potato)	67.3	37.3
Grains (excl. corn)	38.7	21.5
Corn	24.9	13.8
Forage seeds	20.1	11.2
Cotton	19.6	10.9
Sunflower	3.0	1.6
Rice	2.3	1.3
Sugar beet	1.9	1.1
Grass seeds	1.6	0.9
Rapeseed	0.6	0.4
Soya	0.3	0.2

Source: Greek Industry

Vegetables

In MY 2013/14, total vegetable seed sales in Greece were valued at \$67.3 million, with tomato and potato seeds accounting for the lion's share of the market in this category. Certified tomato seeds are imported mostly from the Netherlands, France, Italy, and Israel.

Grains

In MY 2013/14, total grain seed sales in Greece were valued at over \$63 million, with corn accounting for \$24.9 million of the total. Certified corn seed production is very low (only 71 MT) and imports are necessary to meet demand. Annual domestic production of durum wheat seed is estimated to be over 28,000 MT, while barley production is approximately 4,500 MT and soft wheat seed production is approximately 2,500 MT.

Trade

Import value of planting seeds – Greece, (\$1000)USD

	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Market Year Begin	July	July	July
World	72,730	68,518	63,303

EU-28	66,207	59,741	56,537
Non EU	6,523	8,777	6,766

Export value of planting seeds – Greece, (\$1000)USD

	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Market Year Begin	July	July	July
World	7,547	7,604	5,110
EU-28	5,869	6,880	3,424
Non EU	1,678	724	1,686

Source: GTA

Greece is a net importer of planting seeds. Over the last five years, Greece's planting seed imports have averaged \$68 million in value terms. Most of Greece's imports are sourced from European Union countries, with the leading suppliers being Italy, the Netherlands, and France (almost 72 percent of the total in value terms). Hybrid corn and vegetable seeds are the most popular imports. Israel, Turkey, China, and the United States are the biggest planting seed suppliers among non EU countries. Greek imports from the United States reached \$1.3 million in MY 2013/14. The United States supplies mostly tomato, corn, alfalfa, and grass seeds. Within the vegetable category, tomato and squash seeds are the top sellers.

Greece employs the same tariffs and border measures as other EU member states. Tariffs apply to imports from third countries versus seeds from other EU Member States. Tariffs are based on the Harmonized System, with duties levied on imports from non-European Union (EU) on an ad valorem cost, insurance and freight (CIF) basis. The import duty for most products is 5-7%.

Import sources of planting seeds – Greece, \$(1000)

	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Market Year Begin	July	July	July
World	72,730	68,518	63,303
Italy	24,601	25,107	19,303
Netherlands	14,960	14,993	15,369
France	15,564	10,955	10,877
Bulgaria	3,577	3,203	3,212
Romania	1,058	516	2,266
Israel	1,632	1,900	1,816
Turkey	1,614	2,443	1,776
China	1,798	1,349	1,365
Spain	1,721	897	1,295
Germany	1,930	1,377	1,280
Cyprus	424	138	870
<i>United States</i>	721	1,338	697
Hungary	1,128	1,105	694
United Kingdom	552	667	481

Source: GTA

Import of planting seeds by crop category – Greece, \$(1000)

Market Year Begin: July	HS code	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
World		72,730	68,518	63,303
Corn Seed, Certified, Excluding Sweet Corn	100510	32,891	27,460	25,480
Vegetable Seeds For Sowing	120991	23,303	23,130	23,413
Seeds, Fruit And Spores Used For Sowing	120999	6,844	8,307	7,248
Alfalfa Seed For Sowing	120921	3,678	4,217	3,268
Seeds Of Forage Plants For Sowing	120929	2,050	1,523	1,350
Seeds Herbaceous Plants (Flowers, For Sowing)	120930	768	877	630
Rye Grass Seed For Sowing	120925	663	488	608
Clover (<i>Trifolium spp.</i>) Seed For Sowing	120922	1,619	1,597	562
Fescue Seed For Sowing	120923	633	675	459
Sugar Beet Seed Of A Kind Used For Sowing	120910	180	201	244
Kentucky Blue Grass (<i>Poa pratensis L.</i>) Sowing Seed	120924	97	37	35

Source: GTA

Import of planting seeds from United States to Greece, \$(1000)

Market Year Begin: July	HS code	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Total import from U.S.		722	1,338	698
Vegetable seeds for sowing	120991	337	1,007	537
Corn Seed, Certified, Excluding Sweet Corn	100510	73	74	134
Seeds, Fruit And Spores Used For Sowing	120999	0	0	26
Alfalfa Seed For Sowing	120921	224	201	0
Clover (<i>Trifolium spp.</i>) Seed For Sowing	120922	9	23	0
Fescue Seed For Sowing	120923	0	33	0
Rye Grass Seed For Sowing	120925	77	0	0

Source: GTA

Policy Considerations**Common Agricultural Policy on seeds**

OPEKEPE, the Greek Payment Authority for EU Common Agricultural Policy aid schemes provide financial support to agricultural producers from the state budget as de minimis aid. In the latest EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) for 2014-2020, the use of certified seed remains a required condition for European farmers to receive subsidies as "coupled" payments. "Coupled" payments are payments that are linked to a specific product. This decision has increased the use of certified seed in Greece; the Ministry of Rural Development and Food publishes every year the minimum required certified seed to be used. For 2014, durum wheat minimum certified seed is set at 120 kg per hectare

and will increase to 160 kg per hectare for the period 2015-2020. For cotton hybrids, the minimum certified seed is set at 130 kg per hectare, and for cottonseed at 160 kg per hectare.

UPOV and Intellectual Property Rights

The European Union signed the International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants on July 29, 2005 and Greece participates as an observer.

Genetically Engineered Seed

The general position towards GE (Genetically Engineered) crops in Greece remains unfavorable. Greece does not have a coexistence policy and maintains a de facto ban on both the cultivation and importation of GE products. In Greece, there are no GE plants or crops under development. Greece does not commercially cultivate any GE crops, even for GE seed production. Greece has maintained a de facto ban on GE products since April 2005, when it implemented a “safeguard clause” prohibiting the field release of MON 810, a GE corn developed by Monsanto and approved by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA). In July 2008, EFSA determined that Greece’s ban lacked a scientific basis. In November 2011, Greece extended the ban for another two years and expanded the measure to include both importation and cultivation. EFSA again rejected this argument in September 2012. Greece still enforces the cultivation ban despite the EU Court of Justice stating that it has no grounds for relying on the safeguard clause.

In March 2015, [Directive \(EU\) 2015/412](#) allowed Member States (MS) to restrict or ban the cultivation of genetically engineered (GE) plants in their territory. In August 2015, Greece informed the Commission that it intended to officially opt-out of growing MON 810 corn anywhere in its territory. A similar European Commission proposal to enable Member States to restrict or prohibit the sale and use of EU-approved GE food or feed was rejected by the European Parliament in October 2015, as Member States were concerned the law might prove unworkable or would lead to the reintroduction of border checks between pro-GE and anti-GE countries. However, in December 2015, the Environment Committee passed a resolution calling on the Commission to table a new proposal and withhold any new approvals until the process has been revised.

New Plant Breeding Techniques

New breeding techniques (NBT) are the applications of biotechnology and molecular biology that have emerged during the last 20 years. There are no private companies or public institutions conducting research on NBTs in Greece. Till now, no permits have been granted for commercial release of GE plants. Field trials or commercial cultivation of GE plants is prohibited.

Organic Seed

The harmonized EU organic seed regulations that apply in Greece are EC 1452/2003, EC 834/2007, and EC 889/2008, adding or amending to the National Law 1564/1985. Almost all the certified organic seed in Greece is imported. Limited organic plant breeding research is done by the agricultural universities and the National Agricultural Research Foundation.

Advantages and Challenges for planting seeds market in Greece

Advantages	Challenges
Low share of certified seed used in	Price competition from uncertified seed (uncertified

planting seed in Greece means there is great opportunity for development	seed is much cheaper than certified seed)
Production benefits of using high quality seed can be clearly demonstrated	Greece's yields remain very modest and other factors may drive decisions
Greek authorities are becoming increasingly more familiar with modern seed production standards	Greece needs to continue its Registry updates to keep apace of the EU's decisions on seed standards
There is a generally supportive institutional and organizational environment	Illegal trade in seeds
Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) requires the use of certified seed to receive "coupled" payments	Farmers adopt only the minimum certified seed requirements to receive subsidies while containing production costs and the supports only cover a few crops
Greece is part of the EU and, in theory, biotech approvals should be harmonized across the single market	The Greek government has a long standing ban on genetically engineered products both for cultivation and use and has implemented border controls which include random testing
There is a Seed Technology Center in the Agricultural University of Athens to support planting seed technology	The Greek government has cut research funds as part of the latest government austerity measures
Greece needs planting seed imports to sustain its food & feed processing industry	5-7% tariffs apply to imports from third countries versus seeds from other EU Member States

Main State Institutions and Organizations on Greek Seed Market

Ministry of Rural Development and Food

4, Aharnon Street
GR-104 33 Athens
Tel: +30/210/ 212-5525
Fax: +30/210/ 524-0860
E-mail: ggram@hq.minagric.gr
Website: <http://www.minagric.gr/index.php/en/>

General Customs and Excise Department

10, Kar. Serbias Street
GR-10184 Athens
Greece
Tel: +30 210 3375 000; 210 3375 714; 210 3375 715
Fax: +30 210 3375 034
E-mail: gdcustom@otenet.gr
Website: <http://www.e-oikonomia.gr>

KEPPYEL (Fertilizer and Seeds Control and Certification Center)

22, Menandrou Street

GR-10552 Athens

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E-mail: u02904@minagric.gr

Cereal Institute

60548, Themi,

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