

Fact Sheet: The Swedish Market for Honey

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Market Size

Sweden is situated in Northern Europe and has a population of 9.3 million people. The average annual consumption of honey in Sweden is ca 0.7 kg per capita. The total consumption is about 6,000 tonnes. These figures have been stable in recent years.

Market Characteristics

Consumers use honey as spread on bread, to sweeten tea and other drinks and to prepare food. Creamed honey is the biggest honey product in Sweden, but liquid honey increases most. The market shares for Swedish and imported honey have varied a little over the years, depending on the supply of Swedish honey.

In the food sector, there is a general trend of consumer awareness of health, environmental and social issues. Honey is considered to have many health benefits which helps the sales. For the two last years, organic honey has been increasing in Sweden and in 2009 ca 10 % of the total sales consisted of organic honey, according to an industry source. Almost all organic honey sold in retail stores is imported, since there is next to no Swedish organic honey to be had.

There is an increasing interest in single-origin and monofloral honey, but most of the honey sold in Sweden is blended.

Market Segments

Most of the honey goes to direct consumption. On an annual basis, about 3,500 tonnes is sold via retail trade (supermarkets and general grocery stores). A lot of the honey originating in Sweden is sold directly to consumers via on-farm sales, markets and direct contact with friends and neighbours.

The rest of the honey goes to the food service sector (restaurants etc.) and the food processing industry.

Domestic Production and Exports

The production of honey in Sweden was 3,400 tonnes in 2007 (a little bit over half the total consumption). Most

of the beekeepers produce honey on a small scale, as a hobby. As in many other European countries, the number of beekeepers has been decreasing in Sweden for several years. However, the number of bee colonies has been stable and recently the trend has been broken with a small increase in beekeepers. The business organisations for the honey sector are working together in projects to increase the number of bee colonies in Sweden.

The exports of honey from Sweden are small and go mainly to Iceland, Finland, Norway and Denmark. Prices have varied over the years, but the volumes have been quite stable.

Honey Exports from Sweden

Year	Tonnes	SEK
2006	50	645,000
2007	59	894,000
2008	86	2,608,000

Source: Statistics Sweden (SCB)

Imports

In 2008, the total imports of honey to Sweden amounted to 2,800 tonnes. Almost half of this (1,228 tonnes) came from Denmark. France, Germany and Hungary are also important exporters of honey to Sweden. Some of the honey coming from other countries in Europe is likely to originate from developing countries, but it is difficult to say how large this share is. According to CBI (Centre for the Promotion of Imports from Developing Countries), the leading developing country honey supplier to the EU is Argentina, followed by Mexico, Uruguay and China.

Direct imports from developing countries to Sweden are very small. An industry source states that the main problems are poor trade infrastructure and inability to secure quality in the countries in question.

Honey Imports to Sweden

Year	Tonnes	SEK
2006	2,572	59,986,000
2007	2,726	66,176,000
2008	2,798	78,493,000

Source: Statistics Sweden (SCB)

Distribution Channels

The Swedish food-retailing sector is highly concentrated. The biggest retail groups in Sweden are Ica, Coop and Axfood. All of these import honey for private label products (both creamed and liquid honey).

There are also several independent importers and wholesalers. Generally, the importers process, blend and pack the honey themselves.

Market Access

Imports of honey to Sweden from countries outside the EU are subject to an import tariff of 17.3 % (November 2009). Products from ACP and Least Developed Countries are exempted from duty.

For exporters from developing countries, it is important to take note of the fact that only countries on the so-called “third country list” are allowed to export honey to the EU. In October 2009, the list included the following countries: Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, Croatia, Cuba, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Guatemala, India, Israel, Jamaica, Kyrgyzstan, Mexico, Montenegro, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Norway, Pitcairn Islands, Russia, San Marino, Serbia, Switzerland, Tanzania, Taiwan, Thailand, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, Uruguay, USA and Zambia.

Market Prospects

Exporters from developing countries who want to enter the Swedish market face many challenges. They need to convince the importers that they have the capacity to supply a quality product at a competitive price.

In Europe, bee colonies are collapsing. 30 % of all colonies were wiped out in 2008, according to the organisation Apimonda. Pesticides and parasites are considered to be the major threats. These collapsing colonies (so far mainly in Southern and Central Europe) could mean business opportunities for developing countries.

Organic honey has achieved a relatively large share of the market in a short period and the positive trend is expected to continue. This could be an opportunity for developing country producers, as could the interest in single-origin and monofloral honey. All of these, however, make demands on the production conditions.

More Information

National Food Administration (food safety, food regulations) – www.slv.se

Swedish Board of Agriculture (agricultural issues, food consumption statistics)
– www.jordbruksverket.se

Sveriges Biodlares Riksförbund (The Federation of Swedish Beekeepers) – www.biodlarna.se

Swedish Professional Beekeepers
– www.biodlingsforetagarna.nu

The Swedish Chambers of Commerce
– www.swedishchambers.se

Open Trade Gate Sweden (trade rules and requirements)
– www.opentradegate.se

Statistics Sweden – www.scb.se

Swedish Customs – www.tullverket.se

Ica Group – www.ica.se

Coop Group – www.coop.se

Axfood – www.axfood.se

Exchange Rate

1 USD = 6.95 SEK (October 2009)

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