

Polska



Polish Food in Muslim Countries

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Despite some still existing barriers, exports of Polish food to Muslim countries are on the rise.

Polish food exports have been steadily growing in recent years. Polish food is valued for its quality and flavor. The great majority of Polish exports go to the European Union, but Polish producers are starting to conquer new markets as well. The most promising non-European markets are China, South Korea, Vietnam and the Arab countries.

Preliminary data for 2011 show that total agri-food exports from Poland to Arab markets (Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Oman, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Kuwait, Iraq, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Libya) and Turkey were worth 591 million euros, an increase of 36 percent from 2010. The share of these countries in Polish agri-food exports overall was about 4 percent in 2011.

In terms of exports to Muslim countries, the biggest slice of the pie goes to Turkey-48 percent, Algeria-12 percent, and Saudi Arabia-10 percent. The main products exported to these countries include beef (chiefly to Turkey), powdered milk, cheese, chocolate and other goods containing cocoa. These commodities account for about 70 percent of total agri-food exports. Other major product groups include sugar syrups, processed food obtained by the roasting of cereals or cereal products, sugar as well as biscuits and wafers.

Poland has traditional links with the Middle East when it comes to purebred Arabian horses. For almost 20 years, countries like Qatar, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Turkey and Morocco have been the biggest customers buying Polish mares and stallions for breeding. This cooperation also includes the exchange of breeding ideas, programs, hiring of stallions and mares, purchases of embryos and training of race and endurance horses.

A tradition of links between Poland and Muslim countries, the size of the market as well as relative geographical proximity make countries in the Persian Gulf an attractive option for exporters of Polish food. In addition, the current political developments in many of these countries suggest they will increase their food imports in order to avoid social unrest.

Potential areas of cooperation with these countries in the case of the agri-food sector include grain, beef, poultry, processed food including dairy products, beef and poultry cold cuts, fruit and vegetable products, fruit and herbal teas and baked goods, construction of food processing plants, agricultural tools and machinery.

Polish food exports to Arab markets would develop much more quickly if certain barriers did not exist. Among them are cultural differences that create additional difficulties, to mention bans on imports of pork, game and alcohol as well as a broadly interpreted ban on the distribution of publications that run contrary to Islamic sensibilities, which often means separate promotional materials and packaging have to be designed for Arab markets.

Other major obstacles are the result of measures protecting local production (import licenses, customs tariffs and clearance, extra fees, stringent requirements for imported goods, certification of foodstuffs). Moreover, there is strong competition from companies from developed countries; another factor is the privileged position enjoyed by goods from Arab countries. The promotion of Polish brands is hindered by the high cost of taking part in trade fairs and exhibitions.

Though many barriers still exist, agri-food products currently make up a relatively large proportion of Polish exports to Arab markets and Turkey. Exports of agri-food products do not face any special tariff barriers (the customs duty on these goods is mostly either very low or zero). Further development of Polish agri-food exports to these markets is also supported by factors such as Polish agriculture's great potential, the complementary character of the Polish economy and the economies of most Arab countries and, in the case of the Persian Gulf countries, their substantial economic development, significant capital resources and consumers' purchasing power. The rapid population growth in these countries means a steady growth in demand for foodstuffs.

As regards countries of the southern Mediterranean region, under the Euro-Mediterranean Free Trade Area (Euromed FTA) currently being established, agri-food trade between the European Union and these countries will be completely liberalized. Over several years, as trade in foodstuffs between the EU and Arab countries is liberalized, an increase in Polish exports to these countries can be expected.

Furthermore, a large part of Polish agri-food products finds their way to Arab consumers via some Western European countries that have a substantial number of Muslim citizens, as goods consumed in those countries or re-exported from them to Arab countries.

Source: [The Warsaw Voice](#)



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