

Climate Extremes Drive Historic Disruption in European Olive Oil Supply Chain

Climate extremes hit European olive oil production, driving prices up and prompting global shifts in supply, sourcing, and consumer buying habits.



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/EINPresswire.com/ -- Ongoing climate extremes have significantly disrupted olive oil production in Europe. Severe drought and unpredictable weather conditions have resulted in historic production lows across key producing nations. Consequently, prices are soaring, availability is decreasing, and the global supply chain is under increasing pressure.

Spain and Italy, two of the world's leading olive oil producers, have reported substantially reduced yields for the 2023–24 harvest season. These developments directly impact consumer markets across the UK and Europe, with retailers, restaurants, and manufacturers already feeling the effects of supply shortages and escalating costs.

Spain and Italy See Record Low Harvests

Spain typically produces around 50% of the world's olive oil, but this year's harvest is among the lowest in decades. The Andalusia region, the Spanish olive oil production epicentre, has faced one of its most challenging agricultural seasons. Farmers in the area report yield losses of up to 80%, citing a combination of extreme heat and prolonged drought as the primary causes.

Italy, another major global supplier, has also experienced significant setbacks. Key olive-producing regions such as Puglia, Tuscany, and Calabria have endured unseasonable spring frosts followed by record-breaking summer temperatures. The adverse conditions have affected the size, quality, and oil content of olives, resulting in lower-than-average outputs.

Climate Change at the Centre of the Crisis

Agricultural experts attribute these disruptions to the increasingly volatile effects of climate change. While olive trees are historically known for their durability and ability to thrive in Mediterranean climates, the compounding stresses of extreme heat, erratic rainfall, and soil

degradation test the resilience of even mature groves.

“This isn’t an isolated incident,” stated an Italian olive oil producer. “We’re seeing the cumulative impact of consecutive years of abnormal weather. Our trees are under constant stress, making predicting or planning for the future harder.”

Longer-term concerns are also growing, as repeated weather shocks threaten the viability of traditional farming practices. Some farmers are reporting signs of chronic stress in century-old trees, raising fears about irreversible damage and long-term sustainability.

Market Impacts: Prices Surge, Supply Tightens

The decline in supply has led to a noticeable surge in olive oil prices across Europe. In the UK, the retail price of extra virgin olive oil has more than doubled. Bottles that previously retailed for £5 are now frequently priced at £10 or more. Several supermarkets have begun introducing purchasing limits to manage demand and discourage stockpiling.

The situation is creating operational challenges for commercial buyers and manufacturers. Businesses that rely on olive oil as a primary ingredient, such as those producing salad dressings, marinades, sauces, and baked goods, are now navigating cost increases and potential disruptions to product lines.

Global Producers Rise to Fill the Gap

With southern Europe facing a downturn, other olive oil-producing nations are stepping in to address the shortfall. Currently the world’s fourth-largest producer, Tunisia has seen a relatively strong harvest and is expanding its export footprint. Morocco and Turkey also invest in modern agricultural technologies to improve yields and capitalise on growing international demand.

While European producers face mounting challenges, brands like [Morocco Gold](#) are stepping forward. With exceptional quality, sustainable credentials, and global acclaim, it sets new standards for what consumers expect from [premium olive oil](#).

Further afield, countries such as Australia, South Africa, and the United States (especially California) are emerging as competitive producers. Although their current output remains modest compared to Spain and Italy, these newer entrants are increasingly recognised for their quality and innovation. Several have earned international awards and are gaining shelf space in major retail outlets.

Outlook and Adaptation Strategies

While the rise of new producers offers some relief, experts caution that they cannot yet replicate traditional European suppliers' volume, consistency, or cultural significance. In terms of heritage

and scale, the Mediterranean region remains central to the global olive oil market.

In response to the crisis, research initiatives and industry efforts focus on long-term resilience. Measures include breeding drought-tolerant olive tree varieties, adopting precision irrigation techniques, and implementing regenerative farming practices designed to improve soil health and combat erosion.

However, many producers acknowledge that the pace of adaptation may not be fast enough to offset the increasingly erratic weather patterns. Without significant investment and coordinated action, there is growing concern that poor harvests may become more frequent in the coming years.

A Shift in Consumer Perception

As the olive oil landscape evolves, consumers are presented with new choices. While higher prices may limit access for some households, there is also growing awareness of the diversity in flavour and quality offered by emerging producers. Retailers are expanding their sourcing strategies, and industry bodies are encouraging greater transparency and education around origin, sustainability, and production methods.

For now, shoppers can expect continued price volatility and a broader range of options on store shelves. What was once considered a stable pantry essential may soon be viewed as a premium, selectively used product, marking a new chapter for one of the world's most valued cooking staples.

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