

9. Sulphur dioxide content in dried apricots

Comment by INC, International
Nut and Dried Fruit Council

ECE/CTCS/WP.7/GE.2/2023/INF.6



Background

- Sulfur dioxide (SO₂) is currently undergoing a reclassification process under Classification Labelling and Packaging Regulation (EC) 1272/2008.
- In November 2022, EFSA published its opinion on the follow-up of the re-evaluation of sulfur dioxide-sulfites (E 220-228).
- According to EFSA, current sulfur dioxide-sulfite usage levels may be of concern. However, the available toxicity data was insufficient to derive an Acceptable Daily Intake (ADI) level.
- EFSA concluded that for the majority of the population dried fruits are not the main contributors to the exposure of SO₂.

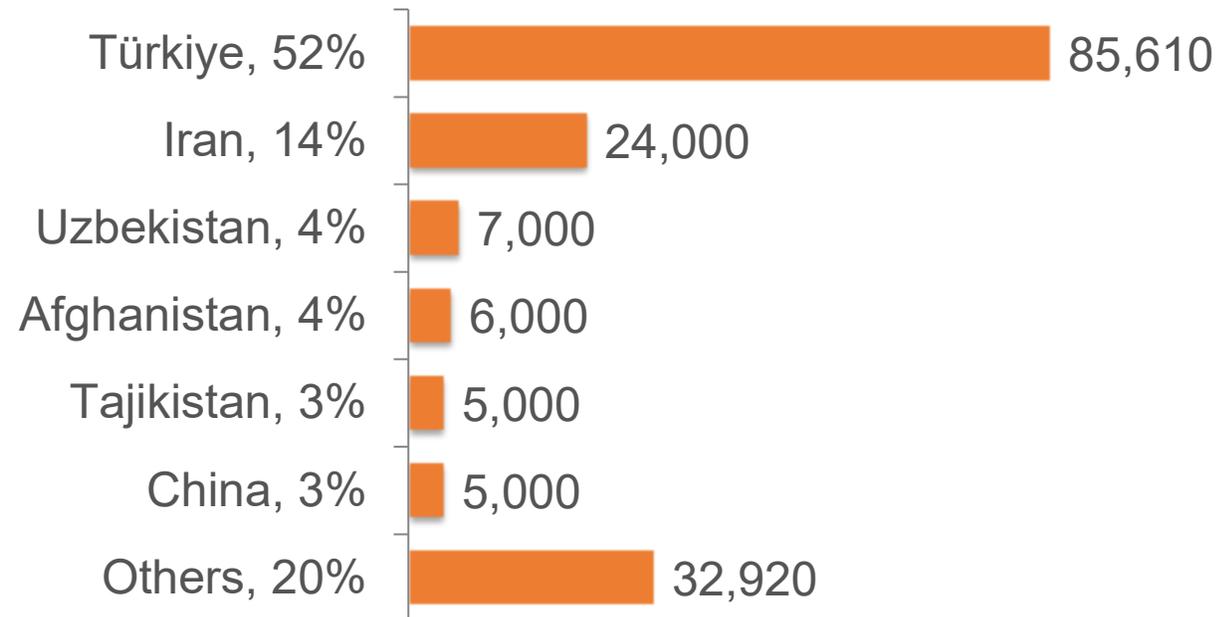
INC Comment (1/5)

- There are no viable alternatives to sulfites that can achieve the same results.
- They are used to:
 - Prevent spoilage
 - Inhibiting the growth of microorganisms, such as bacteria and mold
 - Limiting the risk of ochratoxin A contamination
 - Extend the shelf life of dried fruits
 - Preserve the natural color of the fruit

INC Comment (2/5)

- The majority of dried fruits available in the EU+UK are imported.
- On average, world dried apricot production totals about 175,500 MT.
- In 2022/23, it was estimated at 165,530 MT.

2002/23 World Dried Apricot Production. Metric Tons
Source: INC



INC Comment (3/5)

- 80% of the dried apricots shipped into the EU come from Türkiye.
- Any reduction in the ML would have an impact on the availability of dried apricots in this market, without achieving the intended purpose.
- Malatya farmers and processors have produced dried apricots for centuries.
- Consumers not used to seeing brown dried apricots.



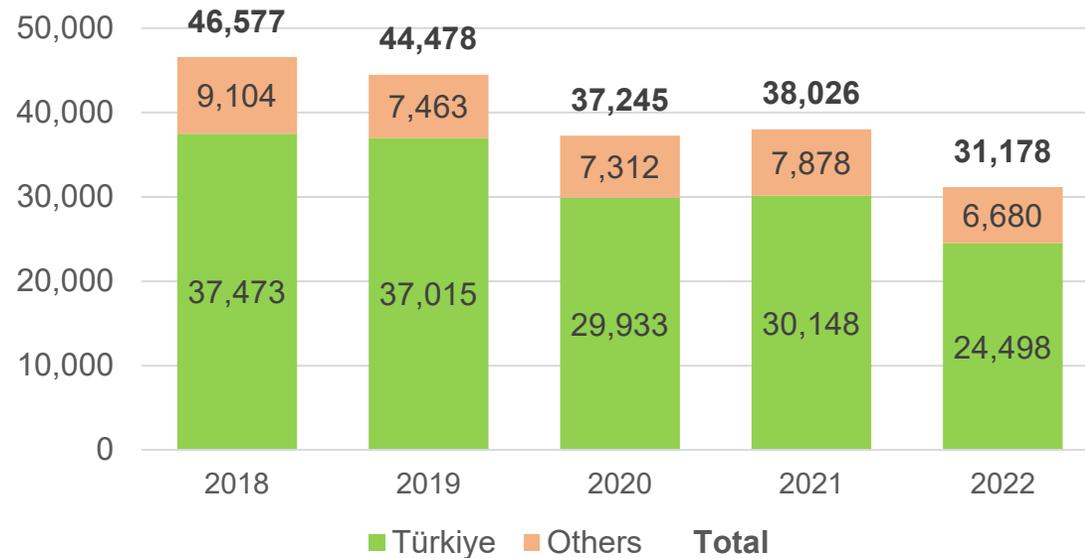
Images by stockking on Freepik

INC Comment (4/5)

- If the ML is reduced, it could lead to a shortage of produce, which would be exported to countries with higher MLs.
- On average, the EU imports 39,500 MT/year; the US, 13,300 MT/year.

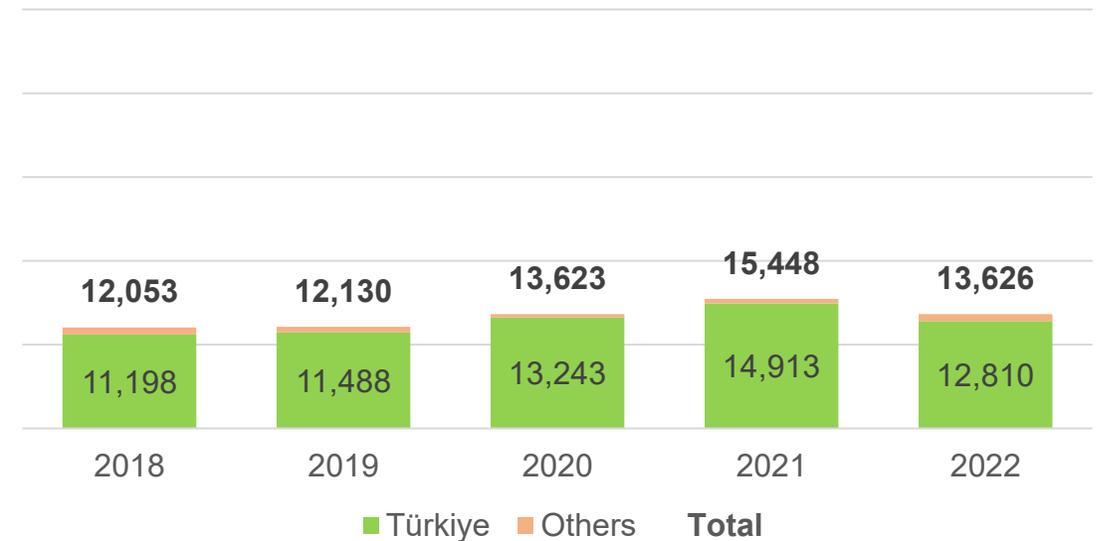
Dried Apricots Imports to the EU. Metric Tons

Source: EUROSTAT



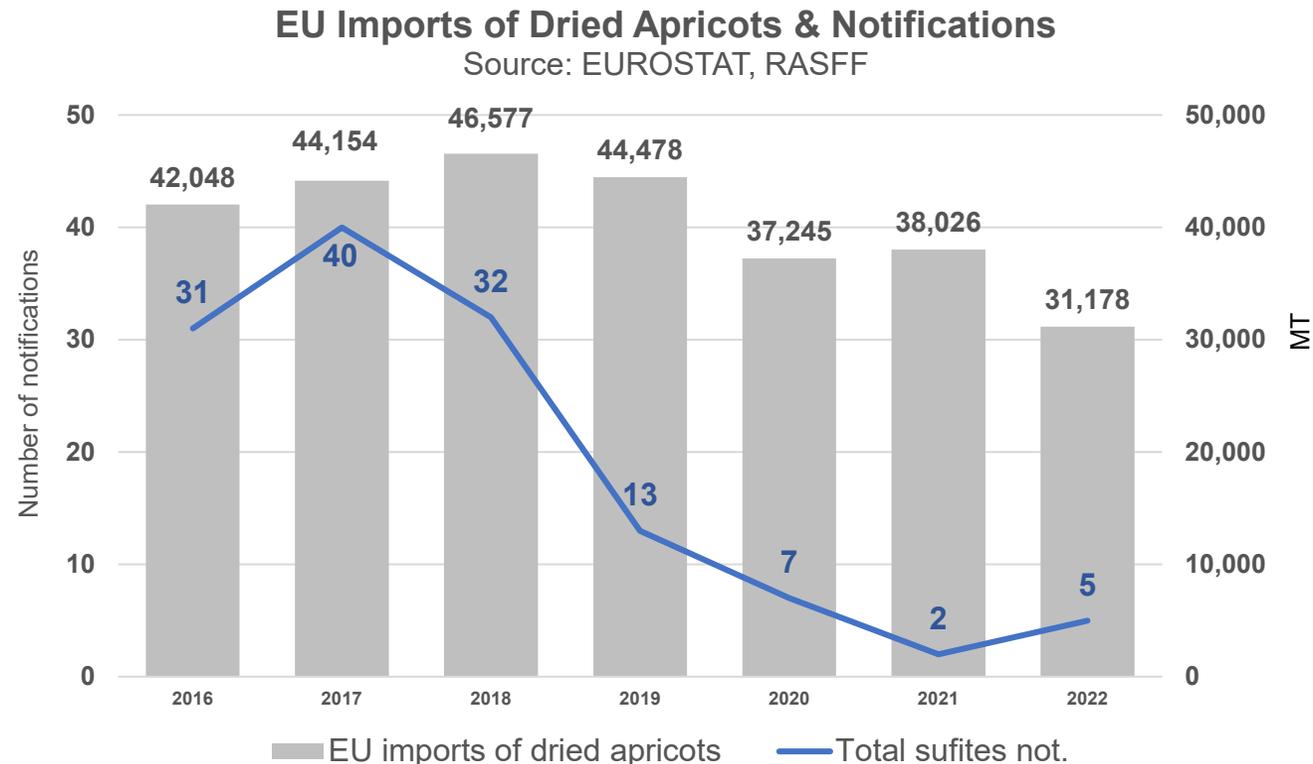
Dried Apricots Imports to the USA. Metric Tons

Source: UN Comtrade Database



INC Comment (5/5)

- In the last years there has been a significant reduction in the number of border rejections related to sulfites and dried apricots —a positive outcome that highlights the success of the industry in ensuring product safety.



Summary & Conclusion

- There are no substitutes that can match the effectiveness of sulfites in preventing spoilage, extending shelf life and retaining color.
- They are essential in the production and marketing of some types of dried fruits —dried apricots being the most prominent example.
- EFSA concluded that the intake of sulfur dioxide-sulfites may represent a safety concern, however, the available toxicity data was insufficient for them to derive an Acceptable Daily Intake level.
- According to EFSA, dried fruits are not the main contributors to SO₂ exposure for the majority of the population.
- Any reduction in the ML (currently at 2000 ppm) would have an impact on the availability of dried apricots in the EU market, without achieving the intended purpose.

THANK YOU

