



# Myanmar – EU Trade Helpdesk



## Myanmar Product Profile: Sesame Seeds

### Myanmar Sesame Seeds

Myanmar is one of the leading producers of sesame seeds. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) officially ranks Myanmar as the world's second largest producer. Myanmar sesame seeds are also produced with a significantly lower use of chemicals than those of other leading exporters.

### Why You Should Buy from Myanmar

- **Sesame seeds are the most extensively grown oilseed crop in Myanmar.** With 1.6 million ha, sesame seeds occupy an estimated 43% of the total oil crops plantation area, the highest of all oil crops in the country.
- **Due to ideal climatic conditions and low use of chemicals, Myanmar sesame seeds are of a high quality.** Sesame seeds are produced in the central dry zone's ideal climate, with plenty of water. Myanmar sesame seeds are free of dust, sand, dirt, and other admixtures, and are also free of pesticide residues.
- **Myanmar producers have a long history and tradition in the production of sesame seeds.** Sesame seeds play an important role in the local diet. 80% of the total production is consumed domestically as a garnish, snack, flavouring, and most importantly, as cooking oil.

Black sesame seeds from Myanmar



Source: Bagan Trade

### Production Data

Myanmar produces over 900,000 tonnes of sesame seeds annually. 80% of seeds are cultivated in the region comprising parts of Mandalay, Sagaing, and Magway provinces. Sesame seeds are produced in three seasons: cool, hot, and rainy season, with the highest output in the rainy (monsoon) season. The monsoon crop is planted in May and harvested in August, quickly unleashing new supplies onto the markets.

The pre-monsoon sesame being harvested



Source: Eleven Myanmar

Despite remaining below both world and regional levels, the yields for sesame seeds have seen impressive improvement since the turn of the century. Since 2000, Myanmar has increased its sesame seed yields by 100%.

Myanmar produces three types of sesame seeds:

- White, commonly roasted and used as a topping in bakery products and in snacks and salads
- Mixed (red, brown, yellow), mainly used for oil extraction – the most inexpensive type
- Black, a high-value ingredient exported to Japan and other consuming countries – the most expensive type

Around 40% of the sesame produced is consumed in the form of edible oil, which is popular for its aroma and unique taste. The by-product of oil production, oil cake, is used as feed for livestock and fish farms.

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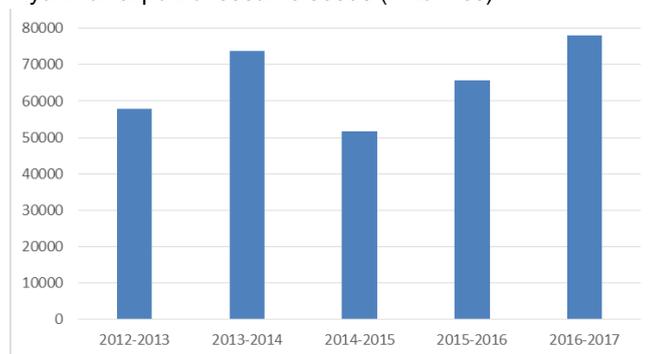
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## Export Structure

Sesame seed is the most important product in Myanmar's oilseed sector, accounting for roughly 94% of Myanmar's oilseeds exports. Myanmar's export of sesame seeds is increasing and in 2017 it reached a value of over USD 111 million and a volume of 78,000 tonnes.

Myanmar export of sesame seeds (in tonnes)



Source: Myanmar Ministry of Commerce, 2018

In 2017, most of Myanmar sesame seeds were exported to China (90%), followed by Japan (6%), and Singapore (3%). The largest European destination for sesame seeds is Switzerland, which imported nearly 300 tonnes of Myanmar sesame seeds in 2017.

## Companies

More than 50 companies are exporting sesame seeds from Myanmar. Companies are based mainly in four regions of Myanmar: Yangon, Mandalay, Sagaing, and Magway. The largest sesame seed export company is [Myawaddy](#), which accounts for 17% of Myanmar's total sesame seeds exports.

Companies exporting sesame seeds usually buy seeds from collector companies that buy the product directly from farmers. Export companies are usually not specialised exclusively in the trade of sesame seeds, but also export pulses and beans. Most companies involved in the sesame seed trade are members of the Myanmar Pulses, Beans and Sesame Seeds Merchants Association.

Several companies are involved in projects aiming to introduce Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) into sesame seed production and increase yields to improve earnings.

Cultivation of sesame to reduce poverty in Magway



Source: Italian Agency for Development Cooperation

## Government and Support Organisations

There are several organisations and projects in Myanmar supporting the sesame seeds sector. Some of the relevant organisations and projects are:

- [Myanmar Pulses, Beans & Sesame Seeds Merchants Association](#): Export-oriented association, the largest of its type in Southeast Asia.
- [Sesamum](#): Italian-funded project that promotes the cultivation of sesame in Myanmar as a key product to reduce local poverty.
- [Farmer to Farmer Sesame Programme](#): Focuses on GAP to improve quality (chemical-free products), collective selling/buying, and value chains.
- [Trade Development Programme \(TDP\)](#): Funded by the EU and co-funded by the German Government, aims to help Myanmar exporters access the EU Market.

## Contact:

Myanmar – EU Trade Helpdesk  
Ministry of Commerce  
No. 228-240 Strand Road, second floor  
Yangon, Myanmar  
Email: [mmeu.tradehelpdesk@gmail.com](mailto:mmeu.tradehelpdesk@gmail.com)

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