



PAKISTAN HIGH COMMISSION, LONDON

ECONOMIC AND TRADE WING

MARKET INTELLIGENCE REPORT

PAKISTANI DATES

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Market Intelligence Report on Pakistani Dates in the UK Market

Dates are one of Pakistan's prominent agricultural products, with significant potential in the UK market due to the high demand from both the general population and the large South Asian and Middle Eastern diaspora. This report examines market trends, competitive landscape, consumer preferences, and provides recommendations for increasing Pakistani date exports to the UK.

1. Market Overview

1.1 UK Market for Dates

The UK market for dates has been steadily growing, driven by increased consumer interest in healthy, natural, and ethnic foods. Dates are commonly consumed during religious occasions, particularly Ramadan, but they are also gaining popularity as a natural sweetener and a healthy snack alternative.

- **Market Size:** The UK imports a significant quantity of dates each year, with the market valued at over £100 million. The demand spikes during religious festivals but remains steady throughout the year due to the broader health and wellness trend.
- **Consumer Demographics:** The primary consumers of dates in the UK include the Muslim community, which uses dates during Ramadan, as well as health-conscious consumers who value dates for their nutritional benefits. There is also a strong demand within the South Asian, Middle Eastern, and North African communities.

1.2 Pakistani Dates in the UK

Pakistan is one of the world's largest producers of dates, with major varieties like Aseel, Karbala, and Begum Jangi. However, the market share of Pakistani dates in the UK is relatively small compared to competitors like Tunisia, Iran, and Saudi Arabia, which dominate the UK market.

- **Current Market Share:** Pakistani dates currently hold a modest share of the UK market, with most imports coming from Sindh and Balochistan regions. However, the market is underdeveloped, with limited brand recognition and market penetration.
- **Challenges:** Pakistani dates face several challenges, including inconsistent quality, lack of branding, limited value-added products, and strong competition from established suppliers. There are also issues related to packaging and marketing that have hindered growth in the UK market.

2. Competitive Landscape

2.1 Key Competitors

- **Tunisia:** Tunisian dates, particularly the Deglet Noor variety, are the most popular in the UK, known for their high quality and strong branding. They are available year-round and have a strong presence in supermarkets.
- **Iran:** Iran supplies a variety of dates, including the popular Mazafati dates. Iranian dates are known for their softness and rich taste, appealing to the gourmet segment.
- **Saudi Arabia:** Saudi dates, especially the Ajwa and Safawi varieties, are highly sought after, especially during Ramadan. Their religious significance adds to their appeal among Muslim consumers.

2.2 Competitive Advantages and Disadvantages

- **Advantages of Pakistani Dates:**
 - **High-Quality Varieties:** Pakistan produces high-quality date varieties like Aseel, which are naturally sweet, rich in flavor, and have a long shelf life.
 - **Competitive Pricing:** Pakistani dates are competitively priced, making them attractive to cost-conscious consumers.
 - **Seasonal Advantage:** Pakistani dates are harvested earlier in the year, allowing them to reach the market before the peak demand during Ramadan.
- **Disadvantages:**
 - **Lack of Branding:** Pakistani dates are often sold as generic products, with little emphasis on branding or quality differentiation.
 - **Inconsistent Quality:** There are issues with quality consistency, which can affect consumer trust and repeat purchases.
 - **Limited Value-Added Products:** There is a lack of innovation in packaging and product offerings, such as date-based snacks, syrups, or processed date products.

3. Consumer Preferences and Trends

3.1 Health and Wellness Trend

The growing trend towards health and wellness has increased demand for natural and minimally processed foods. Dates are increasingly seen as a healthy alternative to sugar and are used in cooking, baking, and snacking.

3.2 Cultural and Religious Factors

Dates hold significant cultural and religious value, particularly within Muslim communities. The demand surges during Ramadan and other religious events, making it a key period for marketing and sales.

3.3 Organic and Fair-Trade Products

There is a growing demand for organic and fair-trade products in the UK. Consumers are increasingly looking for products that are sustainably sourced and ethically produced, which presents an opportunity for Pakistani exporters to differentiate their offerings.

4. Strategies to Enhance Pakistani Date Exports to the UK

4.1 Improve Quality and Consistency

- **Adopt International Standards:** Implementing and adhering to international quality standards, such as HACCP and ISO, can help ensure the consistent quality of Pakistani dates, which is crucial for building consumer trust.
- **Supply Chain Improvements:** Enhancing the supply chain, from harvesting to packaging, can reduce wastage and ensure that dates reach the market in optimal condition.

4.2 Branding and Marketing

- **Develop Strong Brands:** Investing in branding that highlights the unique qualities of Pakistani dates, such as their flavour profile, nutritional benefits, and cultural significance, can help differentiate them in the market.
- **Targeted Marketing Campaigns:** Marketing campaigns should target key consumer segments, including health-conscious consumers and the Muslim community, particularly during Ramadan and other religious events.