

USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

GAIN Report

Global Agricultural Information Network

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Approved By:

Bret Tate

Prepared By:

Oren Shaked

Report Highlights:

- Food of the future – The Israeli Ministry of Agriculture encouraging genome editing
- Future standards for ice cream will favor large producers of dairy goodness over smaller
- A dim future for Israeli pear growers as they sue the government over losses
- Medicine of the future? The Ministry of Agriculture approves 40 new producers of medicinal marijuana
- Vestiges of the past – Israelis pay more for food due to regulation and antiquated subsidies

General Information:

Food of the Future – The Israeli Ministry of Agriculture encouraging genome editing

The Israeli Ministry of Agriculture (MOAG) is bypassing the ban on development of GMO food products by using genomic editing, which is an approved technology in Israel. The MOAG announced earlier this month that it will support research on food production using genomic editing. The MOAG is encouraging research of *foods for the future*, which will require the use of less fertilizers and pesticides, while having additional nutritional value.

Future standards for ice cream will favor large producers of dairy goodness over smaller

An amended Israeli standard for ice cream is being churned out. Producers using vegetable fats for ice cream production will soon be able to market their product as *ice cream* instead of having to label it as *ice cream with vegetable fats* as required by current regulations. The beneficiaries will be large ice cream producers who will no longer be required to clearly distinguish products containing vegetable oils from those made with all-dairy ingredients.

A dim future for Israeli pear growers as they sue the government over losses

Twenty six Israeli pear growers are suing the Government of Israel for US \$1.3 million in losses for opening the market to duty free quotas in 2015 and 2016. The government usually issues duty free quotas in order to manage the shortage of pears in the local market. According to Israeli pear growers, the government has mistakenly issued quotas in recent years in excess of domestic demand, driving down prices and creating losses to domestic producers.

Medicine of the future? The MOAG approves 40 new producers of medicinal marijuana

The Israeli Ministry of Agriculture issued an additional 40 permits to farmers wanting to grow cannabis. These forty will add to the eight growers already growing and supplying the local medicinal marijuana market. The MOAG recently approved funds for further research on the cannabis plant, which should help growers bring better quality and a more uniform product to the medicinal market. There are currently 28,000 registered users of medicinal cannabis in Israel.

Vestiges of the past – Israelis pay more for food due to regulation and antiquated subsidies

The Israeli consumer pays US \$700 million annually due to government support programs to the dairy and poultry sectors. Israel, unlike many developed countries, still supports some of its growers with indirect supports, such as production quotas, customs duties, and import quotas. The costs of these programs are rolled over to consumers. The egg industry receives an annual support of US \$160 million, based on a target price for eggs. The government also issues an annual production quota for milk producers, as well as controlling quota distribution between producers. These antiquated programs support farmers, at the cost of increased grocery bills for consumers.