

Key facts

Global production: 200,000 tonnes per year

Major producers: India, Syria, Turkey, Iran

Major exporters: India

Price (India, 2014 average): INR 140 per kg

Food uses: cooking ingredient, essential oil

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Cumin: commodity factsheet

Description: Cumin is the seed of the cumin plant, an annual herb which is native to the Mediterranean region. It belongs to the Apiaceae family, a group of plants comprising herbs such as anise, caraway, coriander, dill and fennel. Cumin is extensively used in cuisines around the world, particularly in South Asia, Northern Africa and Latin America. In Europe, it is used sometimes in bread or cheese making. Cumin is also known for its health benefits, as it helps digestion and is rich in vitamins.



Production process: Cumin is a drought tolerant, tropical or subtropical plant, which likes warm and dry climates. The optimum growth temperatures range between 25-30° Celsius. Depending on variety, the length of the crop season is between 100-120 days.

In India, sowing usually starts in the last few weeks of October to the first part of December. In Syria and Turkey, sowing starts in March. Seeds are sown at a depth of 1-2cm depending on the type of soil and sowing method. Sometimes seeds can be soaked before sowing in order to support good germination.

When the plant turns yellowish-brown, approximately four months after planting, the cumin seeds are harvested. The whole plants are cut or uprooted and piled in the threshing yard, where they are left to dry in the sun. When the plants are ready, they are thrashed to separate the seeds and cleaned by winnowing.

Following the winnowing, fresh seeds are further sun-dried, sorted, graded, bagged and stored in ventilated warehouses.

Which Datagain price series to use?

Datagain code	Commodity	Grade/details	Origin	Delivery	Location/destination
SQ37	cumin	number 1		market price	India
4M09	cumin	natural		Izmir Mercantile Exchange	Turkey

Grades/varieties: There are three major types of cumin seed in the market which differ in seed colour, quantity of essential oil and flavour. These are Iranian, Indian and Middle Eastern cumin. Within India, there are several commercially grown cultivars of cumin such as RZ19, RZ209, RS1, MC43 or GC1, which differ in maturity time, resistance to disease or average yield. Black cumin, often mistakenly thought to be part of the cumin family, are distantly related crops *Bunium Bulbocastanum* and *Nigella Sativa*.

Production and trade: Global production amounts to approximately 200,000 tonnes. India is the largest producer of cumin, with around 75% of the total crop produced. Gujarat and Rajasthan are the major producing regions within India, while Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh produce small quantities of cumin. The remaining 25% of global output is divided between Syria, Turkey, Iran and China. Until recently, Syria was the second largest producer accounting for around 16% of total output.

India is the main global exporter of cumin, with around 50,000 tonnes exported annually. The US, UK and Brazil are the leading importers of Indian origin cumin seeds.

Commodity crop calendar:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
India		■	■	■	■					■	■	■
Turkey/Iran			■	■	■	■		■	■	■		
Syria			■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■		

Harvest in India starts in February and extends into April. February and March are the peak arrival months. Usually there is good export demand for Indian cumin during the peak arrival season. This is largely down to different harvest periods between India and other major producers, where peak arrivals are between August and September.

Key:

■ Sowing
■ Harvest

Price influencing factors:

- Weather conditions are the major factor affecting the price of cumin. Cumin cultivation requires warm climate, with low precipitation. If a prolonged period of cold and wet weather occurs, in particular during the harvest time, both quantity and quality of the cumin will be adversely affected. Also, wet weather during the harvest can lead to the spread of fungal diseases.
- If prices of other crops such as cotton, fennel or coriander generate higher revenues than cumin, farmers will prefer those crops and dedicate a larger area for their cultivation. The opposite is true if cumin prices are high. As a result, cumin acreage can fluctuate sharply from one season to another.
- In the longer term, prices of cumin are susceptible to rises in the national minimum wage as the crop is entirely harvested by hand.