

Ylang Ylang Oil – a review of production from Comoros

Ylang ylang oil is one of the major traditional export products of the Comoros (together with vanilla and cloves) and an important ingredient in many fine fragrances. The crop is grown by small farmers, and the flowers are distilled by a large number of small distillers. Production is centered on 2 islands – Anjouan and Mohéli. In the past, Comoros produced a diversity of other essential oils, but production is now almost exclusively limited to ylang ylang.

Ylang ylang oil is an essential oil distilled from the fully open flowers of the ylang ylang tree, *Cananga odorata*. The oil is used in high quality (haute gamme) perfumery. In Comoros, ylang ylang oil was traditionally produced in 5 qualities (fractions): Extra-S, Extra, Première, Deuxième, and Troisième (ES, E, P, D, T). However most production in Comoros is now only of 2 grades: a higher (E+P+D) and lower quality (T).

1 Export supply

Ylang oil is only produced in Comoros, Mayotte and Madagascar¹. Comoros is the major producer, followed by Madagascar. Production in Mayotte has almost stopped (due to uncompetitively high labour costs). Full trade data for ylang ylang is not available for the EU market as ylang is combined with niaouli and clove oils in the Harmonised Codes². Comoros and Mayotte do not produce any significant quantities of these other oils, so all imports to the EU can be taken as ylang oil. However Madagascar produces both niaouli and large volumes of clove oils and it is not possible to separate out ylang oil volumes. In the US trade data, however, ylang is only combined with cananga oil, so the oils can be separated by production origin.

Production of ylang ylang oil has been in long term decline, with production in both Comoros and Mayotte having fallen significantly over the past 30 years. From past production levels of around 90 tonnes, recent production in Comoros has been in the range 30 to 40 tonnes, down from levels in the range 40-50 tonnes over the period 2005-2010. Production in Mayotte has declined from around 20 tonnes to 1 tonne or less over the last 5 years. Current production levels in Madagascar are not known but are estimated to have been maintained in the range 15 tonnes.

France dominates the trade in ylang ylang oil from origin and almost all production from Comoros and Mayotte is exported to France. EU imports of ylang oil from Comoros and Mayotte over the period 2005-2014 is shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Ylang ylang imports to EU from Comoros & Mayotte, 2005-2014, tons

Origin	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Comoros	50.1	64.2	53.8	54.8	39.8	54.9	39.3	31.9	41.1	24.7
Mayotte	10.5	7.8	8.0	7.9	4.4	3.7	0.9	1.2	1.1	0.0
Total	60.6	72.0	61.8	62.7	44.2	58.6	40.2	33.1	42.2	24.7

Source: EuroStats

Imports of ylang ylang and cananga oils into the USA are shown in Table 2. Supply is dominated by France, with almost no direct imports from the Comoros, although direct imports from Madagascar have started to increase over the last 5 years

¹ Cananga oil is produced from the same species in Indonesia and Philippines, but this is of a different and lower quality and does not compete directly with ylang ylang oil (depending on prices, it can substitute for the troisième grade).

² 33012911: terpenic oils of ylang ylang, niaouli and clove; 33012931 terpeneless oils of ylang ylang, niaouli and clove. Almost all oil is exported as the unmodified terpenic oil. Data is given for the 2 codes combined.

Table 2 USA imports of ylang ylang and cananga oil, by major origin, 2005-2014, tonnes

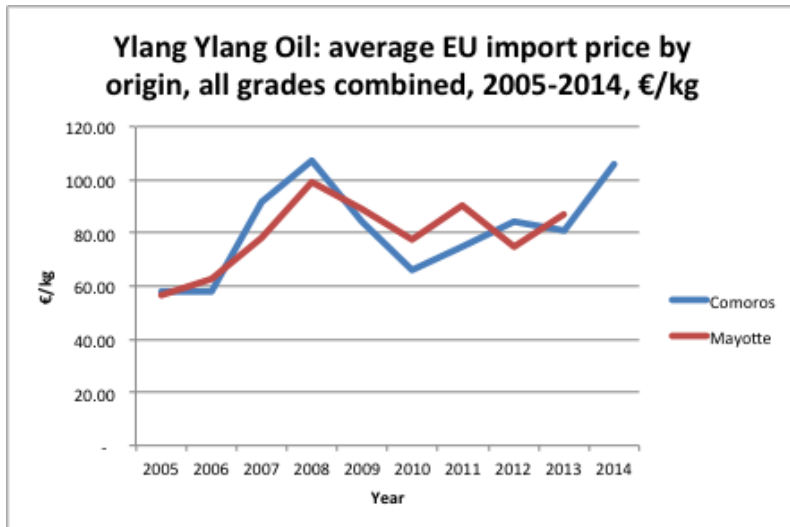
Origin	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
France	22.8	30.7	29.2	28.8	20.5	27.7	12.7	12.0	13.9	20.6
Madagascar	0.8	0.3	0.8	1.2	0.7	1.1	7.3	7.2	7.7	3.9
Comoros	0.0	0.1	0.8	0.4	0.1	0.3	0.0	0.1	0.2	0.1
Indonesia	1.5	1.8	3.2	1.0	1.5	1.9	1.2	1.0	1.0	0.4
Other ³	5.4	13.4	3.0	2.4	2.0	3.0	2.4	1.0	06	7.4
TOTAL	30.5	46.3	37.0	33.8	24.8	34.0	23.6	21.3	23.4	32.4

Source: US FAS

2 Ylang ylang export prices

A long term price series (€/kg) for ylang ylang imports to the EU from Comoros and Mayotte is shown in Figure 1. Ylang oil is priced by grade, and import prices therefore only show an average of all grades. However, the graph shows clearly that prices have been highly variable (varying in the range €60 to €120/kg over the past 10 years), and that there has been a consistent increase in prices over the past 5 years since earlier lows. Increases in market prices have reflected increases in prices for both flowers and oil at the distillery in Comoros. Over the past 10 years, prices for flowers have risen from KMF 75-150/kg to KMF 350-400/kg in 2012, to current prices of KMF 500/kg. Over the same period prices for oil at the distillery have risen from KMF 375/degree/kg to KMF 1,000/degree/kg in 2012, to current prices of KMF 1,450/degree/kg.

Figure 1 EU: average import price for ylang oil, 2005-2014, €/kg



Source: EuroStats

Ylang grades are determined by the specific density of the oil, with the different fractions separated on the basis of density. A generally accepted division of the factions is shown below, but a range of cut-offs are used depending on buyer preference.

Table 3 Ylang ylang oil grades

³ Primarily re-exports from other European countries.

	Specific density⁴	% in Comoros oils	% in Madagascar oils
Extra & Extra S	950° to 970°	24%	3%
Première	934° to 945°	10%	20%
Deuxième	920° to 932°	8%	17%
Troisième	900° to 916°	58%	60%

Source: Olivier de Bontin, IFEAT 2006

Prices for the high quality grades (ES, E, P, D) are calculated on the basis of actual measured degrees of density; troisième is priced on a fixed per kg price. Current buying prices at the distillery are:

- Higher grades: KMF 1,450 per degree above 900
- Troisième: KMF 14,500/kg

On the basis of an average of 55° (955°) for the higher grade, the price at the distillery would be KMF 79,750 (€162 / US\$ 178 per kg). With an average ratio of production of 1kg higher grade for each 2 kgs lower grade, the overall average price at the distillery for all production will be in the range €74 / US\$82 per kg.

If only the higher grades are produced (the distillation stopped after around 4 hours before the production of troisième begins), volumes will be lower, but average prices much higher.

⁴ Where water is 1000°