

Bulayhan - “A Turkish Tahini Brand to Rely On”



Mr Mustafa Talha Bulayci
International Trade Manager,
Bulayci Kardesler Company, Turkey

Overview of Bulayhan Company

Bulayhan was established in 1952 by my great grandfather; It has been 70 years since then. I am the fourth generation in this business. We have been making tahini and halva for the past 70 years, and have sufficient experience both in the domestic and international markets. Production capacity is mostly about sesame seeds (85 percent) and tahini. We buy natural sesame seeds and then hull, roast, bake and use other methods to produce various kinds of sesame seeds. We are into both import and export.



How much does Bulayhan import out of the overall turkey imports?

Import of sesame seeds	
Turkey	200,000MT
Bulayhan Company	10,000MT (Total)
	2000 MT (i.e., 20%) of Tahini
	8000MT Sesame Seeds-Hulling, Roasting, Bagels (mostly used sesame seeds Simit), Bakery, Bread, etc.,

We produce ten different kinds of sesame seeds after processing, including sesame seeds for tahini and bagels.

Importing Nations

Sesame imports come from Africa predominantly, with some quantities coming from South America and Asia (India, Pakistan). We are operating in all major African sesame-producing countries. As a manufacturer, importers place top priority on the quality of the sesame seeds such as taste, purity, and foreign matter.

Is there any quality specification for producing tahini?

Yes, sesame seeds should have an oil content that is more than 50 percent, as they are produced by pressing sesame seeds mechanically. Sesame seeds must also be pure and tasty; bitter seeds are not preferred. We have three different sortex machines for cleaning the sesame, as it has to be cleaned well for more taste and purity.



Which variety of sesame seeds always meets the requirement for tahini?

The gadarif variety of Sudan and Ethiopia are well suited for tahini, because of their high oil content, and taste. From Nigeria, only two (Kano and Benue regions)

varieties can be used for tahini among the six varieties available there; however, taste differs from time to time. Turkey utilizes a lot of sesame seeds from Chad for bagels because of its smaller size.



Ingredients involved in manufacturing tahini and its conversion ratio

Tahini has to be made out using 100% sesame seeds only, without the usage of any other ingredients. However, some sesame seeds are lost during the hulling and baking process, and this percentage is higher in tahini than in other products, in the range of 10 to 20 percent. Approximately 10 percent of the grain is lost after hulling; the amount varies on the purity.



Is there any change in the consumption pattern or composition of sesame due to the depreciation of the Turkish Lira?

Consumption is shifting; for instance, the cafe used to purchase 100 kg per week but now only buys 50 kg (50 percent). However, they are still making the same number of bagels every day (2000), but the quantity of sesame seeds on top of each bagel is almost 50 percent. For example, while last year we were purchasing a simit for two (2) Turkish Liras, the current price is five (2.5 times) in the domestic market.

The quantity exported and key export markets for tahini

Mostly 20 to 30 percent, of our production, is exported mostly to Europe in the form of roasted, hulled, and various forms of sesame seeds and tahini. Turkey produces a variety of processed sesame seeds used in products like bagels, biscuits, and other baked goods that other nations do not. Thus, companies that use sesame seeds purchase the same from Turkey. Moreover, Turkey is the preferred country for purchases of tahini as there are only about five to six countries that produce tahini.

Internal consumption of Tahini in Turkey

Tahini is the most specific product we use in deserts, and salads, and it is commonly used in bakeries, and it also offers more health benefits related to the lungs, stomach, etc., as a result, Tahini consumption does not change much. In Turkey, sesame oil doesn't have much market. However, we are closing the range

with tahini. We are also using tahini for producing halva and there are a lot of companies that produce halva.

Of the 200,000MT of natural sesame seeds imported by Turkey, how much is used for tahini manufacturing?

About 25 to 30 percent of the imported sesame seeds are used for making tahini and halva. The rest is used for hulled sesame seeds. Turkey also uses natural sesame seeds, but they are used in processed form (unpeeled form).

What is the methodology followed for hulling in Turkey and what is the recovery ratio?

The facilities and machines used in Turkey and India almost the same for hulling systems, but there

are few differences pertain to the company. With the help of the Research and Development (R&D) department, we are adding new components to the hulling system. For instance, if we have lost 15% of hulling loss, we can add more water, add elimination systems, use it again, etc. If there is a 25% loss of hulled sesame seeds by experience, we reduce it to 10 to 15 percent of that loss. We are trying to figure out how to get a better product with less loss. Hulled sesame is more competitive. Many companies are attempting to produce better goods at lower costs as sesame seeds have become more significant for the Turkish, Indian, and European markets.



In the USA, the consumption of hummus has been increasing over the last few years. How much quantity of hummus is consumed by Turkey and what is the scope for exporting the same to the USA?

Turkey is also consuming hummus, but they mainly consume tahini and halva. Turkey consumes hummus at a lower rate than other nations. Comparatively speaking, we sell primarily to Europe as compared to the USA. Although the demand for goods and services in Europe is growing, we still choose to expand to other American nations as well. With about 40MT, we are currently among Turkey's top three sesame firms. 30 to 35 percent of production daily is used for exports, leaving the remaining for the domestic market.

What is the Mersin port infrastructure like and what is its current situation?

As of now, everything is working smoothly in Mersin Port, which is the most significant port for imported sesame seeds. However, there are certain difficulties while importing, such as Sudan's inability to export the produce for a whole year, which impacts the state of the market. However, things are currently looking good, with the exception of higher freight costs, which are not good for Turkey, because we imported goods from South America, wherein the rising freight costs have made it unattractive to buyers.

Does Turkey import sesame seeds from Sudan via road?

Yes, but it has reduced over the last two years when Sudan stood

as a top importer and the volume of imports was very significant. Though Chad is now more important than Sudan, most of our imports still come from Sudan.

Hulling Units in Turkey

Currently, more than five hulling enterprises produce hulled sesame seeds in Turkey. In addition to these, there are local hulling units (more than 30 to 40 Units) that manufacture bagels, tahini, and bakery products. In Turkey, large companies served as the local suppliers. Regarding volume, they are not a competitor. We purchase natural sesame directly from companies and process it, but some nations never hull; instead, they consistently purchase from us. One could estimate that Turkey's installed capacity for hulling units is 40,000MT.

