



Although of the highest quality, Greek olive oil is difficult to find in German supermarkets. But Italian oil, which is often mixed with Greek, is plentiful. So why can't Greece market its produce better?

With about 70 percent of overall consumption, Italian olive oil has an unquestioned supremacy on the German market. Spanish and Greek olive oil account for just 10 percent each. But according to Johannes Eisenbach, coordinator of a network of approximately 1,000 small and medium-sized organic farms in Greece and Cyprus, this number belies the quality of Greek olive oil.



Eisenbach believes Greece can enter the German market

He told a meeting of the German Hanns Seidel Foundation on the Greek island of Lesbos that Italian oil needs to be mixed with Greek to produce the kind of quality and taste which German supermarkets require. The blend is a bargain for Italian traders, who can purchase the Greek oil at just 1.70 euros (\$2.15) per liter before selling it at a much higher rate.

But, Eisenbach said, the arrangement is not that great for Greek farmers, and he had a suggestion as to how to improve the situation: "Greek producers and cooperatives would not be allowed to sell to Italian purchasers for a period of four years. That way, Greece might be able to market for itself the 20 percent of Greek oil which is currently in Italian oil."

Eisenbach readily admitted such a proposal is radical. More realistic, he said, would be a much more difficult road - with Greek producers gaining their own access to the German market. Here they could learn from Italian distribution companies that have built up a relationship of trust with German supermarket chains after decades of guaranteed delivery, fixed prices and agreed quality.

