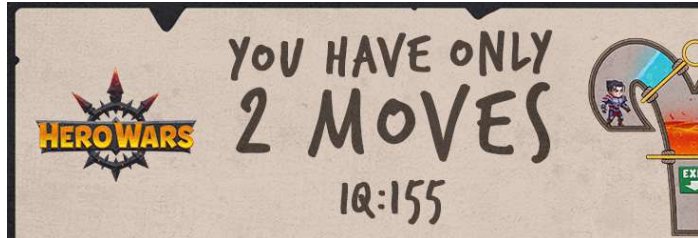


Indian rice: EU liberalises it, Italian producers don't agree

According to the Ente Nazionale Risi, reciprocity is needed on the use of pesticides



After a ten-year hiatus, in the summer of 2022 the European Commission resumed negotiations with India for the definition of a free trade agreement. India is the world's largest exporter of rice and in previous negotiations it had advanced the request for various duty-free import quotas which, if agreed in the current negotiations, would further reduce the trading space for EU Long B rice, which has already shrunk following the continuous tariff concessions by the European Union to the major world exporters of rice.

According to the Ente Nazionale Risi, "India's requests must be rejected not only because this country enjoys duty exemption for eight varieties of husked Basmati rice, but also because in 2022 on the portal of the community alert system Rasff were found as many as 42 notifications on rice

imported from India (28% of the total notifications on rice), due to the presence of agropharmaceuticals (thiamethoxam, tricyclazole, carbendazim and chlorpyrifos) the use of which is not permitted in the European Union".

As recently as a couple of months ago, the European Commission's proposal to raise the maximum residue level of tricyclazole from the current value of 0 did not pass within the Standing Committee on Plants, Animals, Food and Feed (Scopaff). 0.01 mg/kg to 0.09 mg/kg for imported rice only. Now the Commission will have to go through the Appeals Committee and, if it obtains a qualified majority, it will be able to adopt the proposal which would represent a real mockery for the Community rice supply chain because the ban on the use of tricyclazole for cultivation would remain in the European Union of rice, while imported rice, especially Indian rice, would benefit from a limit of 0.09 mg/kg.

The fact that in September 2020 India forwarded to the European Commission the request for recognition of the PGI "Basmati" should not be overlooked. "In terms of law, the Indian request should even have been considered inadmissible, but the fact is that, instead, it is still operational and, if it manages to go through, it would be taken into consideration in the current negotiations with the more than concrete risk of access unlimited on the EU market with zero duty for Indian PGI Basmati rice", continues the note from the Ente Nazionale Risi.

"While our rice farmers have to respect bans and strict rules for the use of crop protection products, as always we find ourselves having to counter the short-sightedness of the European Commission which should defend EU productions", declares **Paolo Carrà**, president of the Ente Nazionale Risi. "The European rice production chain has always supported the need for a reciprocity of rules regarding the use of pesticides. It would be embarrassing to recognize a PGI on Basmati using a generic term, unrelated to the territory, which is exactly equivalent to Basmati of Pakistani origin and which could, at the end of the free trade negotiation process, give rise to an exemption from duty for quantities unlimited".

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