

Two European states imported Iranian oil in 2023: Eurostat

Economy Desk

European statistics, in its latest data, reported that Iran exported oil to two European countries including Bulgaria and Georgia in 2023 despite sanctions.

Despite the EU's oil sanctions on Iran, Bulgaria, as an official member of the EU, imported oil from the country. In 2022, Bulgaria had only imported 168 tons of oil or oil products from Iran, but in 2023, the import of oil or oil products from Iran increased sixfold to 1,058 tons, as cited by IRNA, quoting European statistics releasing the data.

Although the amount of Bulgaria's oil imports from Iran in 2023 is not a significant figure, it indicates the willingness of European countries to ignore the sanctions against Iran.

Eurostat had previously reported Germany's import of 70,000 tons of Iranian oil or oil products for the first time since 2018, but when this news became public the German government was forced to take a stance, claiming that this figure was mistakenly included in the import statistics from Iran, and, in fact, Germany had imported this oil shipment from Mexico.

Eurostat's data also revealed that Georgia, as an observer member of the European Union, imported 4,438 tons of oil or oil products from Iran last year. Georgia's oil imports from Iran underwent a six percent growth compared to the previous year. In 2022, Georgia imported a total of 4,161 tons of oil or oil products from Iran.

The United States, under former president Donald Trump, reinstated crippling sanctions on Iran after unilaterally walking out of the 2015 nuclear deal in May 2018, despite Iran's full compliance with the terms of the agreement, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

Fed's progress against inflation 'not assured': Powell

The US Federal Reserve's progress in bringing down inflation is "not assured," the chair of the country's central bank said Wednesday ahead of two days of hearings in Washington.

The Fed has hiked its key lending rate to a 23-year high to tackle stubborn inflation, successfully bringing the rate of price increases down from multi-decade highs toward its long-run target of two percent, AFP reported. But inflation remains elevated, and recent data indicate that the road to two percent could be a bumpy one.

Iran ranks first in collecting flare gases among 70 countries: Minister



IRNA

Economic Desk

Iranian Oil Minister Javad Owji said on Wednesday that Iran's oil and gas industry has achieved the first rank in collecting flare gases among gas-producing and exporting countries.

On the sidelines of a cabinet meeting on Wednesday, he referred to a report by the recent Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF) held in Algeria, adding that Iran's oil and gas industry

has successfully secured the first rank in collecting flare gases and operationalizing them among the countries supplying 70 percent of the world's gas, ISNA reported.

According to Owji, a comprehensive report was given at the forum on the situation of gas reserves and gas production among member states which supply 70 percent of the world's gas.

According to the secretariat of the GECF, the average

natural gas production growth stands at 2.5 percent, with Iran managing to register a 5 percent gas production growth, he added.

The next edition of the GECF will be held in Iran in November 2024, the oil minister revealed, adding that Iran presented its up- and downstream capabilities in the oil and gas industry at the Algeria forum.

In addition, Iran unveiled a new format of contracts

in developing the country's gas fields to attract foreign investors, Owji said.

He further pointed out that Iran concluded good agreements with the member states of gas exporting countries in the fields of exporting technical and engineering services, selling gas byproducts, developing gas fields, and developing gas pressure-boosting stations.

The minister said that Iran's oil and gas pipeline infrastructure for energy

transit from north to south, east, and west is fully prepared, and good proposals were made by President Ebrahim Raisi to this global assembly.

Raisi on Wednesday praised the Oil Ministry for the successful implementation of projects for capturing associated petroleum gas (APG) over the past two years.

In a cabinet weekly meeting, he expressed his satisfaction with the ministry's performance after Iran re-

ceived the GECF Award for Long-Term Commitment to Natural Gas in 2024 for doing unique research into flare gas collection and putting the research into practice on the sidelines of the 7th GESF Summit of Heads of State and Government in the Algerian capital Algiers.

Raisi urged the acceleration of the implementation of APG collection projects in an effort to prevent the burning of national wealth and the polluting of the air.

Iran adds 20 new countries to its saffron destination list



By Sadeq Dehqan
Staff writer

The head of Iran's Saffron Exporters Association said with the addition of 20 new destinations for saffron exports this Iranian year (began on March 21, 2023), the number of importing countries has increased to 67.

Talking to Iran Daily, Gholamreza Miri said that major saffron exports go to the UAE, China, Spain, Afghanistan, and Italy, with countries like the Netherlands, Taiwan, France, Kuwait, and Oman following in the subsequent rankings.

He added that, however, the countries that receive the largest share of Iran's

saffron imports repackage a significant portion of their imported product into smaller packaging for re-export.

According to the official, Iran holds over 90% of the world's saffron in the global market and, in this respect, no country can compete with Iran.

Nevertheless, due to Iran mainly exporting its saffron production in bulk or large packaging, while not having a significant role in saffron processing and secondary product manufacturing, it has had a small share of the added value of this product.

The official mentioned that saffron is utilized in various industries worldwide, such as pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, and food, etc.

Explaining the current

status of saffron exports this year, Miri said despite a 12% increase in weight-based saffron exports in the first ten months of this year, the value has decreased by 4% compared to the previous year, reaching \$165 million. Price fluctuations have affected export trends, with sudden increases impacting market dynamics.

He said Iran's saffron exports in the first ten months of the year have reached approximately 173 tons, showing a 12% growth compared to the same period last year when it was 154 tons.

However, in terms of value, the country's saffron exports in the first ten months of this

year have decreased by 4% compared to the previous year, dropping from \$173 million to \$165 million.

According to the association chief, due to water shortages and climatic conditions, saffron production in the country this year faced a 40 to 50 percent decrease compared

to last year, resulting in a price increase, almost doubling.

The saffron harvest season spans from October 17 to December 16, with this year's production estimated at 120 to 150 tons, he said.

The official highlighted challenges, including the price increases that have caused destination countries to consider it unjustified, resulting in a decline in recent months' saffron exports.

He also cited smuggling of saffron as another reason for the decrease in exports, mentioning that, unfortunately, at times, at least 10 tons of saffron are smuggled out of the

country monthly, negatively impacting the country's official export volume, while global demand for saffron is increasing day by day.

Miri emphasized the need for measures to combat saffron smuggling and suggested that facilitating official exports and removing export barriers would naturally reduce the inclination towards smuggling.



Challenges to Pakistan's economic growth amidst political crisis



By Syed Ali Hassan
Iran Daily's correspondent in Pakistan

The United Nations, in its World Economic Situation report, predicts a 2% GDP growth for Pakistan in 2024, rising to 2.4% in 2025. India's overall growth rate in 2023-24 is expected to be 7.3%, however, the inflation rate in India is high, which is weakening the purchasing power of the people and there is a risk of slowing down the economic growth rate.

Grappling with a longstanding budget deficit, Pakistan relies on foreign loans to bridge the foreign exchange gap. The four key sources for foreign exchange reserves include exports, remittances, foreign direct investment (FDI), and loans for development projects and aid.

Exports have dwindled since the military ousted Imran Khan's government at the behest of the US. Remittances hit a three-year low in June 2023, with a 6.81% decrease to \$13.43 billion in the first six months of FY24. Overseas Pakistanis express discontent with the political system, leading to protests and a decline in remittances. The weak global economy compounds the export slump.

The political upheaval, marked by the military's intervention and subsequent actions, has led to overseas Pakistanis disapproving of the political landscape. Protesters, especially against the ousting of Imran Khan in April 2022, faced oppression from security forces, impacting women in politics, who are now held without trial.

In a country with a history of military influence, women's political roles were already limited. Imran Khan's removal further decreased opportunities for women in politics, hindering remittance prospects. The State Bank reveals a growing reliance on remittances from Pakistanis in the Middle East.