

Textile group aims to defy rivals in olive oil

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The 40-year-old textile company Kuloğlu Group has just entered the olive oil sector with its brand, Zeytin İskelesi.

The chance to compete against China, Pakistan and India, particularly in textiles, is gradually falling, said İsmail Kuloğlu, chairman of Kuloğlu Group, which has been operating in the Aegean city of İzmir. However, the Chinese do not constitute a threat in olive oil, he said, adding: "It is a chance for Turkey that China does not produce olive oil. We have decided to invest wholly in domestic production."

Zeytin İskelesi brand has emerged following a preparation period of around two years, said Fatih Cenikli, managing director of Kuloğlu. The firm has invested 5 million euros on

Kuloğlu, an İzmir-based firm operating in textiles, becomes fed up with cheap products from China and India. Following a preparation period of two years, the company has launched olive oil production, which seems to be a safe haven against China

22,000 square meters of land in the Tire Organized Industrial Zone. "The plant, which has a closed area of 5,500 sq m. and machines imported from Italy, has a capacity to process 15,000 tons of natural olive oil annually," he said. "Our aim is to present the most qualified olive oil to Turkish consumers." Noting that Kuloğlu set off with a goal to prioritize the domestic market and to present quality olive oil to Turkish consumers, he said that the firm wants to

specialize in just natural olive oil.

"Our product range consists of just extra-virgin olive oil, natural first olive oil and natural organic oils. We prefer to present our oils in glass or tinfoils. The packages range between one to five liters. After collecting from Aegean producers, we have the product undergo a detailed control process in our laboratories."

Currently Zeytin İskelesi is available in market chains CarrefourSA and Real. The firm has also made an agreement with Kipa, a domestic Turkish supermarket chain that has a

partnership with U.K.-based super-market chain Tesco, Cenikli said. The aim is to exist in the supermarkets with a boutique-quality product, he added.

After reaching a certain market at home, Kuloğlu is planning to expand in foreign countries. The firm aims to become an important player in the olive oil sector and then to present the olive oil to the world," he said.

Plan to expand abroad

The top threats for olive oil include contact with heat, light and air, but Zeytin İskelesi carefully prevents this through a different system, Cenikli said. "While bottling olive oil, we prevent its contact with air via advanced technology. We remove air from the bottle when it's both empty and full. This way we protect the freshness and smell of olive oil for a long time. With the system called 'nitrogen cushioning,' our product keeps its freshness till its lid is open." Kuloğlu is one of the first company to implement this system in Turkey. "In order to cut contact with light, we prefer dark bottles, which are twice as expensive as other bottles. We buy it from Italian Saint Gobain, one of the world's oldest glass producers."



GOAL: Kuloğlu set off with a goal to prioritize the domestic market and to present quality olive oil to Turkish consumers, says İsmail Kuloğlu, chairman of Kuloğlu Group.