

# Update

October 2014 – Issue 4

**Beacon Commodities**



A recent visit to some of our suppliers of Juniper Berries in Macedonia has helped us to understand the potential problems being experienced with the 2014 crop. We arrived to heavy rain showers which is proving a major problem this year. We hope that the report below will explain this issue and cover the market supply/demand.



Juniper bush with ripe and un-ripe berries

## The 2014 crop

Following a difficult year in 2013 when there was a lack of supply, the quality of the 2014 crop appears to be in good order with average yields expected. There is a significant issue this year with the moisture content of the berries. Macedonia, as with parts of Eastern Europe, have suffered from late summer rains, raising the moisture content of the berries in some cases to 35-38%. Although initially this does not affect the quality of the berries, the moisture content needs to be reduced well below 20-24%, as high moisture content will lead to fermentation and therefore deterioration of the berries when stored. Unfortunately, this is not a process that can be completed overnight as drying the berries too quickly can lead to cooking and therefore vastly affect the quality of the berries.

This problem will have a slight affect on the supply of berries with many Lots being ready slightly later than originally expected. As long as they are treated correctly, the supply and correct quality will be available. It is also worth remembering that initially due to the shortages in 2013, there will be a number of buyers entering the market early and therefore there is unlikely to be a reduction in price.



Although high in moisture, good quality berries

## Juniperus Communis v Juniperus Oxycedrus

While in the mountains of Macedonia with the various collectors we came across a number of Juniperus Oxycedrus plants with a large crop of berries. It was interesting to see the two plants, Juniperus Communis and Juniperus Oxycedrus growing together. Both plants throw their crop 12 months in advance, this means both ripe and unripe berries are on the bush at the same time. Apart from the berries the plants look identical and with a small demand from Asia, some of the Oxycedrus berries are picked at harvest.



Juniperus Oxycedrus





Tommy's pathetic attempt



Berries about to be harvested



Berries in need of cleaning and sorting



Michael's haul



Sieve and stick for collecting

## Harvesting the juniper berries

We both made rather pathetic attempts at harvesting the juniper in the mountains and the skills and determination needed were clear for us to see. The difficult terrain, heat, and uncomfortable conditions that accompany a juniper harvest allowed us to understand how impressive an experienced collector at work really is and how they have acquired their skills over many years.

One important aspect our visit has made clear, is the necessity to clean the berries and remove the unripe, discoloured berries and any other foreign weeds and stalks. The issue of unripe berries being scattered all over the plant at the time of harvest and the eventuality that some of these will be un-intentionally picked, means that this needs to be addressed to ensure a satisfactory quality. This important cleaning will produce a quality product with similar shaped and sized ripe berries free from other impurities.

Just as important this year will be the drying that will taking place at the same time to ensure a quality berry that can be stored and transported around the world.

We hope the above provides a useful insight but if you have any further questions then please do not hesitate to contact us.

