

FEDIOL statement

Rules for Defining the Country of Origin (COO) for vegetable oils and fats

FEDIOL in context

FEDIOL is the European federation representing the interests of the European vegetable oil and protein meal industry. Directly and indirectly, FEDIOL covers about 150 processing sites that crush oilseeds/oil fruits and/or refine crude vegetable oils and fats. These plants belong to around 35 companies. It is estimated that over 80% of the EU crushing and refining activities is covered by the FEDIOL membership structure.

Defining the Country of Origin (COO) for the vegetable oil and fat industry

- Context and rules applicable

Regulation (EU) 1169/2011 establishes the general principles, requirements and responsibilities governing food information, and in particular food labelling. It aims at providing a basis for final consumers to make informed choices following fair information practices. This means in particular that consumers should not be misled and that information should be accurate, clear and easy to understand for the consumer¹.

As per Regulation (EU) No 1169/2011 and Regulation (EEC) No 2913/92, the place where the *last substantial economically justified transformation took place* confers the origin. In practice however, determining the COO is not straight-forward and must follow defined rules.

For refined vegetable oils and fats, their quality for food applications, taste and characteristics are dependent on the refinery. This is where all safety and quality checks are made, regardless of the place of harvest of the oilseed/oil fruit.

As highlighted by the European Commission when assessing the feasibility of mandatory COOL for products such as vegetable oils and fats, "**voluntary origin labelling combined with the already existing mandatory origin labelling regimes for specific foods or categories of food appears as the suitable option. It maintains selling prices at current levels and still allows consumers to choose products with specific origins if they want to, while it does not affect the competitiveness of food business operators and does not impact internal market and international trade**"².

- Scope

The present document should be understood for all vegetable oils and fats, except virgin olive oil, which is specifically covered by Regulation (EU) 29/2012.

¹ For further information on labelling requirements for the ingredient listing of vegetable oils and fats, see FEDIOL guidance [here](#).

² Report from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council regarding the mandatory indication of the country of origin or place of provenance for unprocessed foods, single ingredient products and ingredients that represent more than 50% of a food, COM(2015) 204 final, 20 May 2015.

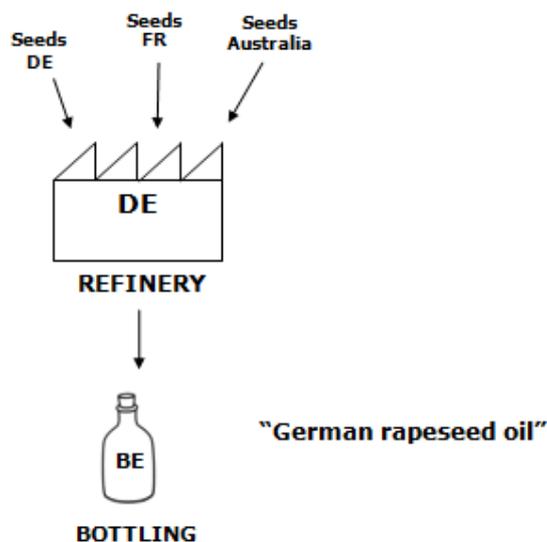
Commission implementing Regulation (EU) 29/2012 on marketing standards for olive oil indeed defines the rules on the applicable country of origin for virgin olive oil, given its specific organoleptic and nutritional properties and prohibits to state the country of origin for the other categories of olive oils³.

- Country of Origin for refined oils and fats

What is determinant for the quality of refined vegetable oils and fats are the technology and the know-how on site. Therefore **the country of origin refers to the country, where the full refining occurred**. Indeed, refining is the *last substantial economically justified transformation* to make vegetable oils and fats suitable for human consumption.

For a single seed/fruit vegetable oil or fat, the **country where the full refining occurs** confers the origin. This concept is coherent with the quality of vegetable oils and fats. In practice, this quality for food applications, as well as the taste and characteristics of the vegetable oil/fat are dependent on the refinery. This is where all safety and quality checks are made, regardless of the place of harvest of the oilseed or oil fruit.

A fully refined vegetable oil or fat from a single seed or fruit source has a German origin when the refining took place in Germany, regardless of the country of production of the crude oil/fat or of the country the oil seeds or fruits comes from or the place of bottling.



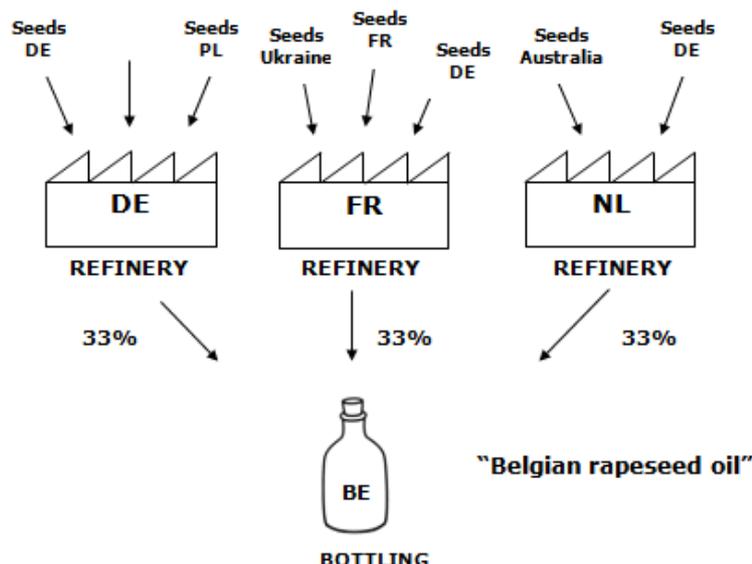
³ As stated in recital 2 of Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 29/2012 on marketing standards for olive oil, "olive oil has certain properties, in particular organoleptic and nutritional properties, which, taking into account its production costs, allow it access to a relatively high-price market compared with most other vegetable fats."

For blends of refined vegetable oils and fats, different cases apply.

- a) Blend of refined vegetable oils and/or fats from the same seed/fruit where none of the oils and fats weights more than 50% of the blend

For a blend of vegetable oils and/or fats from the same seed/fruit refined in different countries, the country of origin is given by the place where the blending took place, if none of the oils and fats weights more than 50% of the blend. Indeed, the blending is considered in this case as the *last substantial economically justified transformation*.

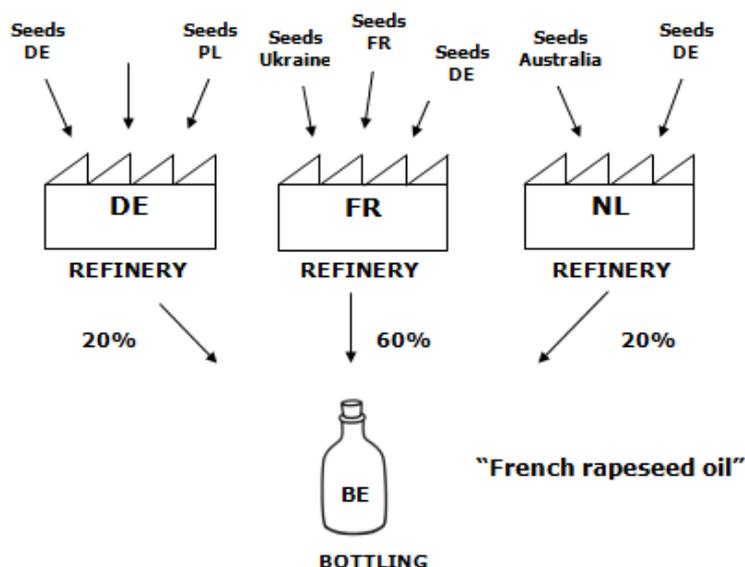
For example, a bottled oil composed in equal parts of oils refined in Germany, France and The Netherlands will have a Belgian country of origin, if the blending took place in Belgium.



- b) Blend of refined vegetable oils and/or fats from the same seed/fruit, where one oil weights more than 50% of the blend

On the contrary, in the case of a blend of refined vegetable oils and/or fats from the same seed/fruit that were refined in different countries, where one oil weights more than 50% of the blend, the country of origin is deemed to be given by this oil, regardless of the place of refining of the other oils or the place of blending. This is because the *last substantial economically justified transformation* is then deemed to be given by the oil representing more than 50% of the blend. That oil gives indeed the main characteristics and specificities to the final product and hence is to be considered as the *last substantial economically justified transformation*.

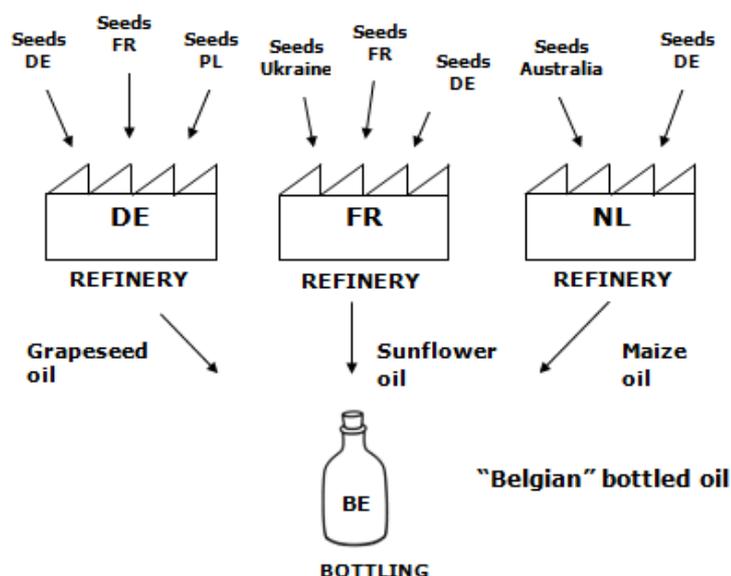
In the case of a bottled oil, where 60% of the refined oil originates from France, for example, the blend will have a French country of origin, wherever the blending took place.



c) Blend of refined vegetable oils and/or fats from different seeds/fruits

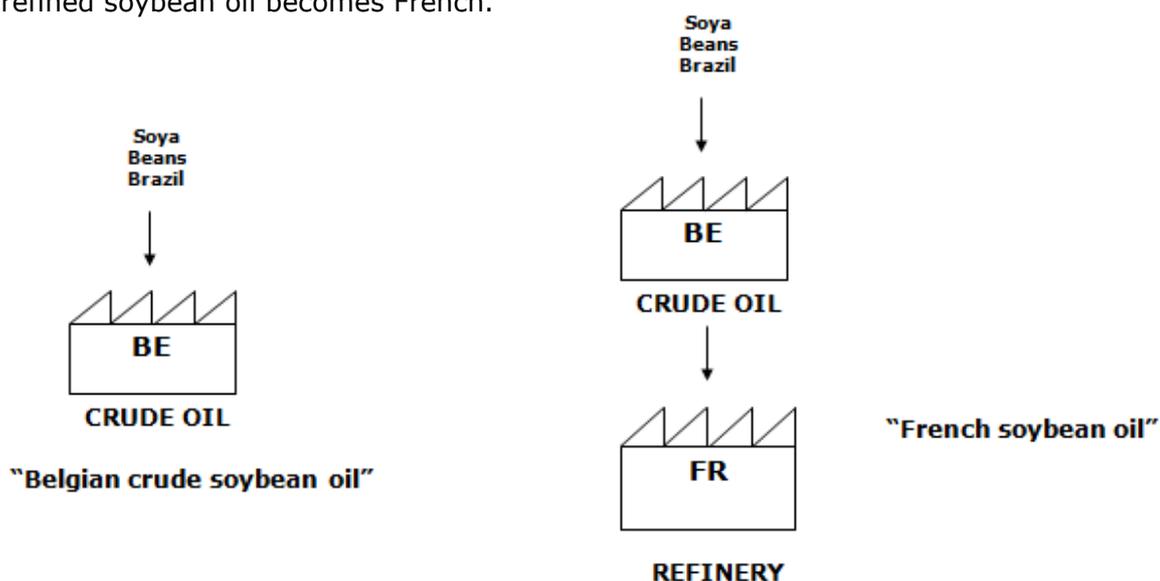
In the case of a **blend of refined vegetable oils and/or fats from different seeds/fruits** that were refined in different countries, the country of origin is the **place of blending** as it is the blending which confers the specific properties of the finished product and not the refining of the different oils and fats.

For example, a bottled oil composed of grapeseed oil, sunflower oil and maize oil will have a Belgian country of origin, if the blending took place in Belgium.



- Country of Origin for crude vegetable oils and fats

In the case of crude vegetable oil, the country of origin is the **country where the crushing of the relevant oil seeds/fruits took place**. As an example, the country of origin of a crude soybean oil derived from the crushing of Brazilian soya beans in Belgium will be Belgian. If this crude soybean oil is then refined in France, the country of origin of the refined soybean oil becomes French.



This document does not represent a FEDIOL position, but is merely meant to explain for a few situations that are typical for the sector, what the rules are for determination of country of origin under EU law (Regulation (EU) 1169/2011 on food information to consumers together with Customs rules).