

ANDALUSIA 2.0

Reinvention and ambition

Region is repositioning beyond traditional industries with initiatives that foster startups, attract investment and boost tech sector's performance

With an outstanding reputation as a wonderful vacation destination blending beautiful beaches, excellent climate and great gastronomy with rich cultural and historical charms, Andalusia has in recent years reinvented itself as a world-class technology and innovation center.

Thanks to the ambitious strategic vision of regional authorities and organizations, as well as countless private businesses, the area of nearly nine million people has become a thriving hub for enterprises of all sizes and active in a wide range of dynamic and lucrative industries.

Parts of the ancient cities of Seville and Málaga, which were perhaps overlooked in the past due to the appeal of more fashionable rivals, have been transformed into dynamic urban centers featuring cutting-edge technology parks, accelerators and multinational R&D hubs that are reshaping the business landscape throughout southern Spain.

Meanwhile, the billions of euros of private and public sector funding that has flooded into the region over the past few years has created an enthralling cocktail of innovation and entrepreneurship, one that has significantly boosted the fast-growing area's annual contribution to Gross Domestic Product.

At the core of this modernization and economic diversification drive are energy and sustainability. Andalusia is already a leader in renewables courtesy of its huge solar and wind potential. Such natural resources and new technologies have allowed the region to embrace large-scale projects in new arenas like green hydrogen production, with such major investment positioning Andalusia as a European reference point for the energy transition push.

Blessed with huge metal and mineral deposits, the region is at the forefront of European efforts to ensure self-sufficiency in an ever more volatile and unpredictable global geopolitical environment. At the same time, agritech innovations are bringing efficiency and sustainability to the region's huge food production base.

Tech-lead sectors such as the aerospace and biotechnology industries are also flourishing through hefty investment in modern research centers and factories. At the same time, the digital economy is gaining traction and efforts to strengthen ties between universities and business have begun to pay handsome dividends.



Andalusia's historic capital, Seville, is home to hundreds of high-tech enterprises.

Strategically located between major markets in northern Europe and Africa, Andalusia serves as a bridge between the Atlantic and Mediterranean. Its fortunate geographical position also means the region acts as gateway to Latin America and as the main maritime route connecting the Mediterranean with Asia.

Investment and funding inflows increase

Andalusia has earned a name for itself as a modern, business-friendly hub with a huge talent pool that serves companies of all sizes in a diverse selection of sectors. Investor confidence in the area's prospects is rising at a record rate.

Clear evidence of this strong level of faith and support from major continental institu-

tions was seen recently when the European Investment Bank (EIB) signed a €133 million loan with the regional government to co-finance social, green and digital investment in the region.

The EIB loan and co-financing from the local administration will help fund the launch of projects that contribute to the dual green and digital transition, social infrastructure development, jobs and training, and social cohesion.

This shot in the arm for regional funding was warmly welcomed by leading public and private sector figures, one of which was the Business Confederation of Seville. The respected organization not only supports businesses, but advocates for the advancement of workers' rights and social improvements via dialogue.

By adopting this approach, the group aims to ensure such advancements do not jeopardize job creation or the survival of self-employed individuals, micro-enterprises, or small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs), which make up over 95% of Andalusia's productive sector.

"Boosting our productive sectors is not about changing the model, but about making them more efficient," states Miguel Rus, chairman of the Business Confederation of Seville, who also heads local construction and infrastructure major, Grupo Rusvel.

"We must continue to strive for excellence in the sectors that drive our region's economy, such as tourism, retail and hospitality; and we must support vital sectors like agriculture.

MIGUEL RUS
CHAIRMAN OF THE BUSINESS
CONFEDERATION OF SEVILLE

"We must continue to strive for excellence in the sectors that drive our region's economy."

"In the mining industry, we need not only carry out extraction here, but also the processing, so that the entire value chain is developed within our region. We must take measures to simplify and streamline administrative procedures, promote innovation and digitalization, support internationalization and provide assistance during transformation processes."

Along with its array of natural and human resources, one of Andalusia's greatest strengths is how the local authorities and businesses pull together to achieve a common goal of growth, employment and environmental protection.

The latter is particularly important given the large region is home to substantial mineral and metal deposits that need to be carefully located, mined and extracted without causing harm to the local environment or its population.

Through the adoption of sustainable mining techniques and technologies, this vital goal is being achieved with increasing frequency and is helping to attract record sums of investment from local and international partners eager to tap into its wealth of underground riches.

Illuminating lives through creative lighting and displays

As a world leader in decorative lighting, Ximenez Group enjoys an outstanding reputation for colorful works

If you have ever taken a stroll through an enchanting Christmas market, or attended festivals, carnivals or fairs in recent times, the chances are your experience and enjoyment was enhanced by one of Ximenez Group's distinctive lighting displays.

Created 70 years ago by founder Francisco Jiménez Carmona through the decoration of a simple wooden star with some bulbs, the proud Andalusian company has grown into a leading figure in the global lighting industry.

With the mission to create innovative decorative lighting solutions via various flexible models and offering a comprehensive service, Ximenez Group strives to use light and illumination to evoke emotions and create unique experiences for people of all ages.

Headquartered in Córdoba, the company is a major force behind Christmas light displays in cities throughout Andalusia, Europe and worldwide. In recent years, Ximenez Group has secured key partnerships to design and install lighting displays for events on five continents. Among its most emblematic projects were those developed in New York, Madrid, Barcelona, Qatar, Dubai, Brussels, London, Mexico City, Milan, Oslo and Australia.

"We always strive to offer a complete end-to-end service to our clients," explains Mariano Jiménez, CEO, Ximenez Group. "We differentiate ourselves by being one of the few companies capable of designing, manufacturing, transporting, installing and monitoring a project, and then deinstalling and storing it when the job is done.

"Many companies focus on production and distribution, but we go further by offering installation



Mariano Jiménez
CEO, Ximenez Group

under rental and sales agreements, covering the entire spectrum of the business. Our 360-degree model has always been fundamental to our identity, as is our personalized approach. We also stand out for having our own factory in Andalusia, which allows us to produce highly customized projects very quickly.

"With this ideology, we also work to provide for the full range of services our clients may need. We form partnerships and alliances with other companies, allowing us to manage everything related to lighting projects. This is evident in our collaborations for drone shows and other key partnerships that help us finalize and deliver our projects."



Magical motifs and large luminous structures capture many people's imagination.

Having established a fine reputation for hosting traditional lighting events, as well as decorative projects for hotels and shopping malls, the ambitious enterprise is investing heavily in state-of-the-art technology platforms to take its portfolio to the next level.

"In recent years, Ximenez Group has continued to demonstrate its capacity for innovation through projects that incorporate new technologies and pursue new possibilities in the lighting segment. In 2025, we aim to consolidate two new projects," Ximénez states.

"The first is our entertainment line, which involves organizing light festivals and immersive experiences for private and public promotion. We can promote these events or design custom offerings for cities to expand their entertainment festivals during key periods, such as Christmas or other special holidays.

"The second is our new line of drone shows, which is another area we plan to consolidate as we continue to grow and innovate in the entertainment sector."

Sustainability ingrained in its DNA

As an exceptionally strong advocate for sustainability, Ximenez Group has introduced a series of measures in recent years to integrate sustainability into its many operations and products. This strategy resulted in the successful development of its flagship Ecogreenlux product, which not only reduces energy consumption, but also light pollution.

"Sustainability is not only a principle, but a fundamental guideline for all our operations and product development," Ximénez affirms. "In addition to launching Ecogreenlux, the most eco-friendly

decorative lighting, we have taken various steps to incorporate sustainability into all aspects of our daily work.

"One example is the installation of solar panels on the roofs of the company's headquarters, which currently produce 71% of the energy we consume, thus reducing our carbon footprint. We are installing solar panels to make all our new buildings self-sufficient.

"The Ximenez Foundation plays a key role in our sustainability commitment. Every year, we organize seminars in which we analyze and improve the environmental impact of our industrial and business activities.

"We invite specialists from around the world and also collaborate on projects with universities to develop and study solutions in this area. This is a priority for us."

Now active in more than 50 countries, Ximenez Group is gaining ground in multiple key markets, including the US. The firm has already developed many projects in the states, but is eager to find a local partner to build on its success.

"With their knowledge of the US market and our potential in production and project development, we could develop larger projects than we have been able to while operating alone," Ximénez concludes.



www.grupoximenez.com



Colorful and traditional festive markets often showcase Ximenez Group's work.



Andalusia's aerospace and defense industrial sector is enjoying spectacular growth.

Aerospace industry revenues take off

Andalusia is firmly on the aviation manufacturing map courtesy of many state-of-the-art factories

While Andalusia is most famous for its well-established agrifood and tourism sectors that make significant contributions to GDP, the area has become a magnet in recent years for investment and companies involved in the cutting edge and dynamic aerospace industry.

With the help of major industry names like Airbus, the local aerospace sector enjoyed a record-breaking year in 2024, generating a total turnover of €2.9 billion, up 7% year-on-year. Over the last decade, the sector's overall revenue has grown by almost a third, reflecting a sustained upward trend despite the difficult years of the COVID-19 pandemic and fluctuations in the global market.

"This dynamism demonstrates the strength of the Andalusian industry and its ability to adapt to an increasingly competitive global environment," says Andalusia's Minister for Industry, Energy and Mines, Jorge Paradela.

"The aerospace sector is a strategic pillar of the economy, representing 13.8% of industrial GDP. This figure not only confirms the sector's consolidation, but its ability to generate wealth, high-skilled employment and added value."

Tasked with promoting the interests of the local aerospace and defense sector and stimulating growth at the national and international level is Andalusia Aerospace. The private association works to help increase competitiveness across the regional aerospace sector.

State-of-the-art tech parks are engines of innovation

The region has become a leading player in Europe's competitive knowledge economy

Andalusia's glowing reputation as a thriving hub for technology-dependent industries extends far beyond aerospace. Much of its success can be attributed to the growing network of technology parks, which have become powerful drivers of innovation, investment and entrepreneurship.

This coordinated network links academia, government and industry, not only providing key infrastructure, but cultivating ecosystems where entrepreneurs, engineers and researchers team up on projects ranging from AI and cybersecurity, to agritech and renewables such as green hydrogen.

The region now has more than 80 innovation centers and science parks and while that number is expected to grow over the next few years, their proposed development is not without challenges. To help overcome these obstacles, local officials are implementing a range of specific measures to strengthen this entrepreneurial ecosystem and support startups.

"As a friend and CEO of a company in the US pointed out, the main problem we face in Europe — and in Andalusia in particular — is the 'Zip Code effect,'" states Andalusia's Minister of University, Research and Innovation, José Carlos Gómez. "The same startup in the US could generate millions of dollars, but here we face cultural and funding challenges.

"To address these challenges, we are working on several fronts. On one hand, we are promoting the creation of networking environments and investor forums to facilitate access to funding. We are also strengthening public-private partnerships through the new Science Act, which will be presented to Parliament soon.

"On the other hand, we are considering the creation of a venture capital fund to support startups emerging from our universities. This fund would provide initial financial support to these firms, helping them get off the ground. While it is still an initial idea, it reflects our commitment to the entrepreneurial ecosystem."

As the first international example of the re-use of a world exhibition (Expo '92), the Cartuja Science and Technology Park in Seville serves as a powerful connection point between universities, science and business. True to its motto of "innovate, collaborate, grow", the facility encourages private investment by positioning itself as an innovative center, where cooperation spurs growth and business competitiveness.

Known as STP Cartuja, the park is home to important technologic agents with high scientific, technical and social skills that facilitate knowledge creation, transmission, diffusion and management and its application to productive activities, lifting up business competitive-

ness of SMEs and various other companies in its environment.

"The park succeeded because a clear plan was defined 33 years ago and because the original model has not been compromised," explains Luis Pérez, CEO of the Cartuja Science and Technology Park. "It was created to house technology companies, public and private research centers and educational institutions.

"The research centers occupy 30% of the park's land and are primarily public, although there are also some private ones. The business community is mostly made up of technology companies. Some 40,000 people daily move around the park. The researchers and employees who work here need services to meet their daily needs, such as food and other logistical support. This has created an ecosystem that not only drives technology and innovation, but also supports the workforce and business community within the park."

Major expansion project taking shape

Home to almost 600 companies, the high-tech park features an enviable occupancy rate of 90%. However, it is expected to become a victim of its own success in the next few years and run out of space. As a result, an expansion project is taking shape, one that will add approximately two million square feet by the end of the decade.

JOSÉ CARLOS GÓMEZ
REGIONAL MINISTER OF UNIVERSITY,
RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

"We are considering the creation of a venture capital fund to support startups emerging from our universities."

"We have requests from national and international firms that need around 540,000 square feet of space, which we currently cannot offer, making this expansion urgent," Pérez states. "We want to double the number of employees and businesses as we have many strengths to attract investment, and because we already have an ecosystem that is now self-sustaining.

"This innovation ecosystem gives us the opportunity to promote funding, support new projects, and establish more research centers. Furthermore, we are preparing for this innovation to translate into industrialization, which will significantly enhance our competitiveness."

Given its excellent information and communication technology (ICT) infrastructure, Andalusia is also one of the most advanced regions



The region's many factories produce aircraft parts, drones and space technologies.

companies] have opened a field of opportunities that we must turn into industrial growth," Paradela adds.

"This upbeat view on the sector's rich potential is echoed by Antonio Gómez, president of Andalucía Aerospace, who sees the sector as a key driver of regional industrial, technological and employment growth. The aeronautical engineer and expert in aerospace management juggles his role with that of CEO of industry heavyweight Aertec, a business he co-founded.

"This growth reflects the collective effort of our companies, and if we take a broader view over the past decade, the balance is even stronger, despite the challenges faced," he says. "We have a robust, competitive and constantly evolving industrial fabric, as shown by our report that highlights a balanced distribution of revenue from aeronautical programs: 45% defense and 55% civil (excluding the revenue of prime contractors).

"This balance enhances the sector's stability and demonstrates its ability to operate successfully in both strategic markets," he adds. "This is, without a doubt, a competitive advantage for

JUAN ROMÁN
DIRECTOR GENERAL,
ANDALUCÍA AEROSPACE

"Within our internationalization strategy, we recognize that the US is a key market, hence why we visit at least once a year."

Andalusia, reinforcing the maturity, versatility, and innovative spirit of our companies."

According to Juan Román, director general of Andalucía Aerospace, the forward-thinking organization is focused on three core pillars as it strives to build on its outstanding progress to date and spur growth. The three pillars are internationalization, innovation and the fostering of business relationships and cross-sector collaboration opportunities.

"We aim to further enhance the export ca-

pabilities of our member firms via internationalization," Román affirms. "While we have had good results, there is room for improvement.

"Within our internationalization strategy, we recognize that the US is a key market. Hence why we visit at least once a year. In recent years, we have gone to Florida, California and Seattle. There, we have had the opportunity to connect with industry giants like Boeing and Collins, who are key players in the aerospace sector.

"From the perspective of the cluster, our focus on innovation is on supporting SMEs, as larger companies typically have their own resources. We facilitate the development of R&D projects by creating consortia that bring together companies with complementary skills, thus promoting greater innovation in the sector.

"We aim to achieve our third fundamental pillar through the various meetings and events we organize for member companies, promoting the exchange of opportunities and collaboration among them."

Abundant aerospace opportunities

With over a century of valuable experience in the industry, including aircraft manufacturing, which positions the region as a leading player in this field, Andalusia is an exceptional region for investing in aerospace sector design, manufacturing and related operations.

This comprehensive ecosystem includes top-tier names, advanced infrastructure, universities and specialized research centers. Such activities are complemented by excellent public-private collaboration, facilitating project implementation and building investor confidence.

"The roadmap for the aerospace industry is defined by digital transformation, sustainability, and technological innovation," Gómez says. "But technology alone is not enough. Turning Andalusia into an attractive, dynamic and internationally competitive employment ecosystem is one of the major challenges that we face over the next few years.

"While we are a major aerospace region, we are not isolated, as we are part of the European Aerospace Cluster Partnership (EACP), a network of over 40 aerospace clusters."



The Andalusia Technology Park hosts the headquarters of multiple tech enterprises.

in Europe when it comes to the application of ICT solutions. Local officials are aware that the development of ICTs and the industrial sector is an axis of cross-sectional growth for productivity and the entire economy.

Such options are particularly popular for teleworking, healthcare, training and virtual and augmented reality, notes investment agency, Invest in Andalusia. The creation of a smart mobilities cluster and a speed-up service for startups aims to create a more dynamic and innovative business network.

"The Andalusian ICT sector also offers blockchain infrastructure support services which are available at the region's main technology parks," the agency notes. "Within ICT, it is important to mention the video games sector, an activity which has become a source of culture, heritage, identity, wealth and employment over the last few decades. Andalusia has established itself as a national leader and hub of Spain's National Digital Content Center.

"Andalusia is also the third most important Spanish region in terms of audiovisual companies, turnover and human resources, with Málaga the most vibrant city. In addition, efforts to boost movie making in Andalusia has resulted in Game of Thrones and Star Wars featuring some of our region's iconic sites."

Diverse range of technology solutions

Away from the big and small screens, Andalusia is making impressive progress in the development of other technology-lead sectors, including in areas such as renewables, aerospace, biotechnology and agri-business.

"Due to its geographical location and its significant investment in renewable energy, Andalusia is also a leader in areas such as bio-

gas," Gómez states. "We have a green hydrogen strategy, with the aim of attracting major green hydrogen infrastructure to our region. These investments in green energy contribute significantly to improving the environment.

"The regional government is working with strategic sectors such as aerospace, particularly in clean and decarbonized aviation projects. In addition, we have funding programs aimed at combating drought, where many solutions are based on renewables.

"We will shortly launch a business research funding call, with one section focused on specific sectors and another on dual-use technology, for civilian and defense applications. This is an excellent time, with clear objectives and defined milestones. Regarding biotechnology and agri-food, the agricultural sector is often perceived as very traditional, but it is brimming with innovation across its operations."

The senior official notes his region has been a pioneer in collaboration between researchers and universities, achieving great advances, though challenges persist when it comes to applying AI and technological development in agriculture associated activities.

"Today, farming is much more accessible and comfortable for people thanks to technology, which helps prevent rural depopulation," the minister explains. "Keeping people in our rural areas is essential, and we must provide them with the necessary tools to do so.

"We are working with universities on training issues, as there is a significant generational shift occurring in the sector. In the field of biotechnology, we are also making progress in its application to the agri-food, fisheries, and pharmaceutical sectors, where we have companies with great potential."



Andalusia has olive oil in its DNA, with the region home to the world's largest collection of olive trees that are cultivated to create countless varieties of delicious olive oil.

Olive oil industry serves up tasty returns

Found in kitchens and on dinner tables around the world, the rich taste and appeal of "liquid gold" is conquering new markets and earning experienced market players lucrative rewards

Olive oil production is absolutely crucial to the Andalusian economy and also forms an essential part of the region's deliciously healthy cuisine. As the world's leading producer and exporter of liquid gold, the scale of the industry is so significant that international visitors to the countless groves surrounding its beautiful towns and villages often remark olive oil appears to run through every Andalusian's veins.

Drizzled on Mediterranean dishes such as fried fish, seafood omelettes, fried vegetables, salads, marinades, tempuras and roasts, olive oil not only adds unique flavour to meals, its myriad of health benefits include an array of anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties.

Spearheading Andalusia's olive oil operations is the famous province of Jaén, an area that has been at the forefront of production and exports for many decades. Known as the country's cradle of olive oil and host of the sector's largest international trade fair, Expoliva, local brands are sold to upscale restaurants and leading hospitality outlets worldwide, as well as appearing on countless residential dinner tables.

Jaén boasts more than 60 million olive trees that produce three million tons of olives each year, with that total used to generate at least 600,000 tons of olive oil per annum.

The importance of the sun-soaked province's contribution to the strength of the Spanish olive oil sector and its leading position internationally was highlighted by Spain's Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, Luis Planas, at this year's edition of Expoliva.

Addressing a large audience of olive oil growers, farmers, marketers, vendors and agricultural officials and experts, the minister hailed the province's ongoing success and development, describing Jaén as the true epicenter of the olive oil industry.

Highlighting the strength of the Spanish olive oil sector and its leading position internationally, he said: "We have 2.8 million hectares of olive groves, 24% of the world's olive groves, and an estimated output for 2025 of 1.4 million tons, representing 40% of global production.

"The goal is to reach four million tons per year of exports worldwide by 2040. We will increase production from the current figure of 3.5 million tons per annum by opening new markets and guaranteeing profitability for farmers, the industry as well as distributors."

Maintaining momentum in key markets

According to Planas, Spanish olive oil represents a product with cultural value, an essential healthy food, and a national symbol. "With 31



Avocados are among the array of agricultural products grown across Andalusia.

Flourishing fields of gold

One of the Mediterranean's richest food regions combines health, flavor as well as innovation

Consumers throughout Europe only need to browse the fresh produce aisles of leading supermarkets to understand and appreciate the impressive scale and reach of Andalusia's long-established, but technology savvy agricultural sector.

Vast amounts of fruits and vegetables of all shapes, tastes, colors and sizes are harvested daily by regional farmers, before beginning the journey from field to plate via fast and efficient supply chains that span multiple continents.

The industry generates more than 10% of Andalusia's GDP and more than 7,000 firms directly employ around 72,000 workers. As well as traditional cash crops, other agrifood areas in which Andalusia is a key player are gourmet products, such as cured Jabugo ham and blue-fin tuna, both known for a level of quality and innovation which attracts names from all over the world, as well as the aquaculture industry.

Andalusian farmers contributed to the 20% year-on-year rise in Spanish fruit and vegetable exports in 2024 to nearly 32,500 tons. In value terms, they climbed 10% year-on-year to around €94 million. Although the introduction of trade tariffs earlier this year by the US administration may act as a brake in import demand, orders for popular perishables like citrus fruits is expected to remain strong.

Courtesy of its fertile soils and favorable climate, Andalusia is one of the Mediterranean's richest food regions, with foreign sales of exports of agri-food and beverages rising to over €13.6 billion last year, according to statistics compiled by the regional government.

As one of Spain's leading growers and exporters of healthy and nutritious crops, its experienced farmers stand at the forefront of innovative technology and harvesting methods. These competitive advantages ensure the region

is more than holding its own against growers from other parts of Spain, as well as rivals from elsewhere in Europe and the world.

Finger on the pulse of consumer tastes

A key factor in this outstanding track record is the ability of Andalusian farmers to identify and to adapt to emerging consumer trends, such as the growing demand for, sustainable, organic and ethically sourced fresh produce.

Through the development of new products and premium brands that offer attractive margins, local agricultural and livestock operators are building both momentum and market share among environmentally conscious shoppers.

According to the latest data from the Regional Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Water and Rural Development, organic farming operations in Andalusia have increased by around a third in the past four years, making it a leading hub for organic operations.

Since 2020, the number of officially registered organic farms in Andalusia has climbed to more than 22,000, with these growers working a total area of over 1.4 million hectares — a figure up 28% since the start of the decade.

"This data reflects the unequivocal commitment of the Andalusian government to sustainability in the agricultural sector and its commitment to a more profitable and efficient agriculture through various measures" comments Andalusia's Secretary General of Agriculture, Livestock and Food, Manuel Gómez.

The senior industry official also revealed in a September presentation in Seville that his ministry's latest production forecast estimates that Andalusia will produce over two million tons of citrus fruit in 2025-2026, representing 37.4% of the total national citrus harvest forecast of nearly 5.5 million tons.

designations of origin and two geographical indications, we are the world leader," he added.

In this context, the minister acknowledged that a government is focused on ensuring the country's farmers and olive oil producers are guaranteed a fair price because they are the weakest link in the supply chain and their efforts must be fairly rewarded.

"Our greatest strength is quality; we must continue to promote it as our hallmark," Planas emphasized during his well received speech to scores of delegates. "We must also defend our position in strategic markets such as the US and open new markets such as Mercosur [South American trade bloc], Japan, South Korea, Canada, the UK and the EU.

LUIS PLANAS
SPANISH MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE,
FISHERIES AND FOOD

"Our [olive oil's] greatest strength is quality; we must continue to promote it as our hallmark."

"The potential is enormous, and we must intensify our promotion efforts through the 'Food from Spain' and 'Spain Food Nation' initiatives," Planas added during his mid-May speech.

Given the imposition of 15% import tariffs by the US government a few months ago, Andalusian olive oil exporters are seeking to expand their presence in markets previously not on their radar, including commercial and domestic consumers in the Middle East and Asia Pacific.

While achieving such a swing in shipments from west to east is easier said than done — especially given olive oil sales to the US generated revenue of more than \$1 billion last year — the

unmatched scale, passion, experience, ambition and dynamism of Andalusia's olive oil sector stands it in exceptionally good stead.

A weighty package of financial support measures from the government for industries impacted by the aforementioned US tariffs has helped cushion the fiscal blow, but olive oil makers still face a slightly uncertain outlook.

Global recognition richly deserved

Growers, millers, bottlers and distributors from across Andalusia were among the many famous and successful industry names to scoop awards at this year's edition of the NYIOOC World Olive Oil Competition, held in New York.

Billed as the world's premier olive oil quality contest, the high-profile competition celebrates the finest extra virgin olive oils (EVOO). Its prestigious list of winners stands as the ultimate guide for discerning consumers and industry professionals, with Andalusian firms among the nearly 100 award winners from Spain.

Among the recipients of a gold award was Aires de Jaén. With an annual production capacity of more than eight million litres a year, its EVOO is sold in dozens of countries.

"Winning an international award is a source of pride and recognition for our work promoting high-quality EVOO," says Rosa López, supply manager of Aires de Jaén. "The teamwork of a highly qualified staff, perfectly ripe fruit and state-of-the-art machinery is allowing us to produce EVOO recognized worldwide."

"Spain is the world leader in olive oil production, but sometimes that position isn't clearly reflected in international consumer perceptions of quality," says Antonio Carrasco, general manager of bottler Goya en España. "Competitions like the NYIOOC are a great help in raising awareness of the excellence that many brands, like Goya, bring to the market."

Cooperative COVAP sets the agri-foods benchmark

Andalusia stands out for its differentiated and exceptional quality dairy and meat products

Every day since its creation back in 1959, Cooperativa Ganadera del Valle de Los Pedroches (COVAP) has pioneered and fine tuned a successful concept in food production in the heart of Andalusia that goes way beyond traditional agriculture and stockbreeding.

Now comprising more than 2,000 members, the cooperative has achieved remarkable growth as it writes new chapters in a story that began with 22 farmers inspired by the saying: 'Unity is Strength'. Founded on values such as entrepreneurship, integrity, commitment and collaboration, this unity has driven COVAP to become the largest first-grade cooperative in the nation.

Andalusia stands tall as Spain's largest agri-foods exporter, accounting for over a fifth of exports in 2024. The resource-rich region is also a major livestock producer, representing 35% and 15% of Spain's entire goat and sheep population, respectively.

"In the past, we mainly exported to Europe, but are diversifying and expanding to other global markets, with a particular focus on Asia and the US," says Juan Antonio Ballesteros, international director of COVAP. "Earlier this year, we achieved a significant milestone by obtaining US government approval to export our lamb products. Only

JUAN ANTONIO BALLESTEROS
INTERNATIONAL DIRECTOR, COVAP

"Earlier this year, we achieved a significant milestone by obtaining US government approval to export our lamb products."

two Spanish firms have secured this approval. We hope 2025 will mark the beginning of stronger commercial ties between Spain and the US, with the addition of this new product to meet American consumer demand.

"Since establishing our US subsidiary, our primary growth strategy has been understanding the market. We emphasize the importance of maintaining a physical presence. We have team members in the US who adapt to the local market, which is essential for truly understanding consumers, competitors and emerging trends."

COVAP is committed to innovation and digitalization, with the senior executive eager to highlight that the most important word for



Juan Antonio Ballesteros
International Director, COVAP

the cooperative is "sustainability," one that is approached from three perspectives: social, economic and environmental.

"Our mission is: 'care for the value of our world together,'" he says. "This means we are obligated to leave a better world for future generations. Innovation is a core part of our DNA as being in such a geographically challenging area, we must do things differently. Innovation is not limited to products; it extends to technologies that make life easier for our farmers. Our aim is to simplify their daily work and technology plays a key role in achieving this."

COVAP was recently recognized in the respected MERCO business reputation assessment rankings as the 12th most reputable firm in the Spanish food sector. While such an impressive ranking is music to the ears of Ballesteros, a core focus on sustainability, innovation and internationalization in 2025 and beyond aims to push it higher.

"At the industrial level, we have some of the most automated and productive facilities, not just in Spain but in Europe," he adds. "Every year, we invest in improving our products and generating value for our farmers while adhering to our commitment to sustainability."

COVAP
www.covap.es

Buried treasures are a catalyst for major mining investment

With the region’s mineral wealth among the best in the world, it has become a focal point for Europe’s clean energy transition through the adoption of sustainable mining methods

Ensuring a reliable supply of critical minerals for today’s broad range of innovative technologies in a wide spectrum of sectors is a priority, with this soaring demand for natural treasures acting as a strong catalyst for growth in Andalusia’s mining sector.

As well as being home to the largest reserve of non-ferrous minerals (polymetallic sulphides) in Europe, the region also hosts one of the richest copper deposits on the planet. This mineral wealth means the industry is strategic because it supplies many other vital sectors.

According to an official study, almost 2,000 exploration points with indications of nearly two dozen strategic minerals considered fundamental by the EU and susceptible to exploitation can be found on the region’s territory.

They include barium, cobalt, phosphorus, graphite, lithium, magnesium, nickel, platinum, titanium, tungsten and vanadium. However, despite such a lengthy list of subsoil resources, only four are presently extracted, namely copper, strontium, fluorspar and feldspar.

Unsurprisingly given the sheer scale and size of its precious mineral and metal deposits, the region’s mining sector generates 40% of the industry’s total output. Major international and domestic mining companies — such as copper giant Cunext — have invested huge sums in existing and new projects that have created thousands of direct and indirect employment opportunities for people of all ages.

While local authorities, of course, strongly support a modern, sustainable and responsible mining model that contributes to industrial and technological development, they have pledged to ensure such activities adhere to the strictest environmental and social standards. This means the sector is increasingly defined by its commitment to innovation, sustainability and industrial safety.

“Andalusia is a region that welcomes industrial investment, offering certainty, legal security, stability, support mechanisms and sound planning,” says Minister Paradelo. “This is the path we must continue to follow to further develop our autonomous community.”

“As the second largest copper producer on the continent, Andalusia must take advantage of its wealth of natural resources, especially giv-

en that 22 of the 34 minerals considered critical are present in its subsoil.

“In addition, we are the first autonomous region in the country to have a complete map of these mineral deposits, with this detailed presentation developed in collaboration with the Geological and Mining Institute of Spain.

“We must advocate for 21st Century mining, which is very different from what most people imagine,” Paradelo comments. “Modern mining incorporates a very high level of technology and innovation, along with a strong environmental commitment, as well as a very positive social impact on the region.”

Protecting assets and the environment

The senior official and his colleagues are working to revitalize the sector and seize this opportunity, convinced that mining is currently experiencing an exciting period, while also understanding their obligation for the responsible use and management of the area’s precious geological heritage for many generations to come.

JORGE PARADELA
REGIONAL MINISTER FOR INDUSTRY,
ENERGY AND MINES

“As the second largest copper producer on the continent, Andalusia must take advantage of its wealth of natural resources.”

According to the Iberian Sustainable Mining Cluster (ISMC), the sector’s sustainability is advancing steadily, supported by a range of certifications that validate best practices in environmental, social, and governance performance.

“In a context where environmental impact and social responsibility are central to corporate strategy, mining companies in Spain can access various sustainability certifications that demonstrate their commitment to more ethical, efficient and environmentally responsible operations,” the ISMC states.

Founded in 2018 and headquartered in León and Seville, the respected organization says giv-



The extraction of precious minerals and metals is big business across Andalusia.

en the global trade uncertainties that have seen new barriers to business crop up, it is essential that the national mining sector learns how to harness its excellent mineral wealth by combining it with responsibility and a strategic vision.

“Spain has a unique potential in critical raw materials which, in the current geopolitical context, will become a pillar of European industrial autonomy,” comments Santiago Cuesta López, ISMC Director.

“The ISMC and its members are committed to innovation, sustainability and international cooperation, working to strengthen Europe’s competitiveness and industrial autonomy.”

Examples of sustainable mining initiatives and investments include the adoption of exciting new technologies that minimize water use, recycle tailings and reduce carbon emissions. Many mines are utilizing digital monitoring systems and automation to improve efficiency and safety, while there is also growing emphasis on circular economy practices, turning by-products into valuable resources.

Among the pioneers of such technologies and practices is Cunext Group, with the copper processor investing in renewables and taking action to reduce waste and its impact on the environment for the benefit of flora and fauna.

Taking time to get things done right

While significant advances have been recorded in recent years in Andalusia’s mining sector, the authorization process for new projects, along with requests for the launch of new capacity at existing mines, is very complex and slow.

However, this in-depth examination process creates absolute confidence in the reliability of what is finally authorized, local officials state. In

some industries, such attention to detail could deter investment, but a strong flow of fresh funding has been forthcoming across various regional projects in recent times.

Among the leading projects given the go-ahead of late are the Los Frailes Mine in Aznalcóllar — following a very complicated, decade-long application process — and the expansion of the Riotinto area. In addition, authorization of the Masa Valverde project — whose deposits include copper, zinc, lead, gold and silver — was granted to Atalaya Mining.

According to Paradelo, “for the first time in decades, the EU is paying attention to raw materials”. This means that “now is the time to believe in mining and have confidence in how firms operate”, he says.

Andalusia will not limit itself to extraction as it wants to promote the processing of minerals and support projects related to recycling. This will be achieved by strengthening the value chain and ensuring the maximum industrial impact of these projects remains in the region.

As well as authorizing new projects, the minister says the overall aim of recently adopted initiatives is greater competitiveness and energy efficiency of mining operations, for which the sector will receive large subsidies. The regulations for such financial support have already been published and the application window is expected to open in the next few months.

Incentive programs offered to the Andalusian industrial sector are generous and have created excellent results in mining and other markets. “In 2025 alone, we have supported more than 20 major industrial initiatives that will mobilize an investment of €283 million and create more than 600 jobs,” Paradelo concludes.

Copper cable major Cunext powers energy transition

Blending fierce ambition and determination with innovative products, Cunext Group transforms precious metals into crucial components for 21st century technologies

Courtesy of Andalusia’s significant deposits of precious metals, which include nearly two thirds of the 34 critical metals identified by the EU as essential for achieving self-sufficiency, the region is Spain’s largest mining and metal-working hub and the second-largest copper producer in the trade bloc.

Home to the copper-rich Pyrite Belt and Betic Cordillera areas that date back to Roman times, a well-established auxiliary and transformation industry has emerged, one that has attracted some of the largest commodity companies in the world.

The development of such a strong non-ferrous metals mining industry over several decades has also been a real boon for many local enterprises that are physically active in the sector, or play a supporting role in terms of logistics and servicing provision.

As a leading processor of mined copper into wires and cables, Cunext Group celebrates its 20th anniversary this year, with the milestone marked by an ambitious expansion drive. The firm is growing its operations through investment in assets like a secondary copper production plant and an expansion of its copper refining operations in Córdoba.

The award-winning company specializes in the transformation of the highest quality copper and aluminum and is present in every sector related to the transmission of energy, data and signals, electric engines, the automotive and railway industries, wind farms, industrial motors, household appliances, telecommunications and construction.

“The copper sector is currently experiencing strong momentum due to the energy transition,” states Dámaso Quintana, Managing Director, Cunext Group. “Electrification of any process requires efficient energy transmission, which is primarily achieved through copper or aluminum cables. Copper cables are mainly used for low-voltage applications and microelectronics, while aluminum cables are preferred for medium- and high-voltage transmission.

“Global market analysis from investment banks predict that copper demand will double between 2024 and 2040. This surge in demand supports the continued growth of both the mining and transformation industries, providing a unique opportunity for expansion that was not as prominent as before the global push for decarbonization and renewable energy adoption.”



Dámaso Quintana
Managing Director, Cunext Group

According to industry data, the global production of copper cable is estimated at 23-25 million tonnes per year. At Cunext’s Córdoba facility alone, the firm transforms more than 210,000 tonnes of copper annually, meaning the plant processes approximately 1% of the world’s copper cable.

Major investment set to pay dividends

Given the forward-thinking company’s importance to international supply chains, a “significant commitment of over €230 million to expand operations” is taking place, Quintana notes. “This investment is focused on incorporating recycled copper into our industrial processes.

“Currently, 90% of the copper we use is mined, while 10% comes from recycled sources. Our goal is to shift this ratio so that 60% of our copper comes from recycled materials and only 40% from mining. This is a major transformation that requires cutting-edge technological and industrial capabilities,” the senior executive explains. “Our investment will enable us to manufacture high-quality copper cables that meet the highest industry standards while also achieving the lowest carbon footprint in the world.”

One of the secrets to Cunext’s success — the firm is now number one in terms of turnover and exports in all of Córdoba — is its ability to continuously evolve its product range. A decade ago, the company incorporated aluminum alongside copper products in a strategic move that has paid off handsomely.



Cunext Group plays a core role in key international copper cable supply chains.

The firm’s innovative approach to green copper production means it is playing an important role in the decarbonization of Spain’s industrial sectors. Such a vital task is one relished by an enterprise that has continuously evolved and perfected its product portfolio to meet the demands of various industries, particularly that of the electric machinery sector.

This strong track record includes applications in offshore and onshore wind energy, where Cunext closely collaborates with turbine manufacturers in product development. “In offshore wind energy, current wind turbines exceed 15 megawatts of power,” Quintana continues.

DÁMASO QUINTANA
MANAGING DIRECTOR, CUNEXT GROUP

“Our joint ventures in the US have ambitious investment and expansion plans, reinforcing our long-term commitment.”

“Just 70 of these turbines can generate the equivalent of a nuclear power plant. The alternators that produce electricity for these turbines require high-performance materials, particularly copper and aluminum, which has driven Cunext to adapt its manufacturing processes accordingly.

“The energy transition’s growing reliance on renewable sources, is significantly increasing the need for power grids. In the US, for instance, investment in grid infrastructure over the next five years is projected to surpass that of the past century. The need to connect distributed generation sources requires more efficient and innovative industrial processes, pushing Cunext to continuously improve its technologies to meet these new demands.”

Cunext is certainly leading by example when it comes to embracing sustainability

and energy efficiency at its various operations. Across its plants, the firm will have 70 megawatts of solar (photovoltaic) energy capacity once its new investment project is finished.

Beyond its clear impact on reducing Cunext’s carbon footprint, this approach also significantly benefits the group’s bottom line as photovoltaic generation without grid transmission is the most cost-efficient energy source available.

International reach continues to grow

Despite only being born just two decades ago, Cunext has built a strong global footprint, with its products now sold in more than 50 countries. The company also maintains operations in various Spanish cities, Italy and the US — with a presence in North Carolina.

“For Europeans, the US is our natural market,” Quintana adds. “We share a similar business mindset, and the legal regulatory frameworks are quite alike, making it a straightforward and natural environment. Likewise, the US finds Spain, particularly Andalusia, an attractive and accessible market.

“Our experience in the US has been highly successful, particularly through our partnership with our American partner associate. This collaboration has been outstanding, and our business has been profitable from day one.

“Our joint ventures in the US have ambitious investment and expansion plans, reinforcing our long-term commitment. The US will continue to be a key market and two-way trade between the historic trading partners — the US and EU — should grow even more.”



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