



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Foreign
Agricultural
Service

FACT SHEET

U.S. Agricultural Imports

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The United States is an extremely attractive market to suppliers worldwide, and this is why imports have grown and will likely continue to grow over the next decade. With almost 300 million of the world's most affluent and demanding consumers, the U.S. food market is among the world's largest. All agriculture and food imports must meet U.S. general, quarantine, and inspection standards. U.S. consumers demand year-round availability of reasonably priced fresh fruits and vegetables, and many choose imported processed foods and beverages that have price and/or quality advantages.

- In FY 2008, USDA projects U.S. agricultural imports will reach a record \$75 billion, while U.S. exports will reach a record \$83.5 billion, creating an \$8.5 billion agricultural trade surplus. Imports have been growing steadily for decades. However, they have accelerated sharply since 2002, increasing by over 10 percent a year – twice the historical rate of import growth.
- *What products are we importing?* Much of the growth in imports over the past decade, and particularly since 2002, has been in either processed food and beverages (including wine and beer) or a number of farm products that do not compete directly with U.S. production, such as coffee, tea, cocoa, raw rubber, and bananas. The increases have been far less in farm products that compete with U.S. farm production. In fact, of the \$30 billion increase in agricultural imports since 2002, competitive farm products represent only 1/3 of this increase, with processed foods and beverages and coffee, tea, cocoa, rubber, and bananas accounting for the lion's share of the gain. These horticultural imports rose from \$3.5 billion in 1980 to \$29.1 billion in 2006.
- *Why are imports growing?* Growth in the **value** of imports has increased since 2002 due to sharp increases in U.S. import prices for a broad range of agricultural products. However, if one looks at growth in the **volume**, instead of the value, of imports since 2002, the results show imports are increasing at less than three percent annually – roughly the same as the previous decade and comparable to the overall growth in the U.S. economy.

For questions about U.S. agricultural trade, please contact FAS Legislative and Public Affairs Office at (202)720-7115 or LPA@fas.usda.gov.

