International Agribusiness Center

Weekly Country Report, January 25-29, 2021

Compiled by Lindsey Sarbacker, Food Export Intern - IABC

USDA/Global Agricultural Information Network Reports
COVID-19 Impacts on Food Distribution in Japan - Update IV – link

In response to a third wave of COVID-19 infections, a new 30-day state of emergency was declared for much of Japan on January 7. Business travel, which was temporarily allowed for 11 countries and regions, has been halted through February 7. Additionally, Government of Japan (GOJ) programs to support domestic tourism have been suspended, which is expected to once again negatively impact hotel, restaurant, and institutional (HRI) sales. Restaurant bankruptcies reached a record high in 2020. Conversely, monthly year-on-year retail sales at supermarkets continue to be stronger on greater demand for at-home cooking during the pandemic. In 2020, total supermarket sales were up for the first time in five years.

Direct Versus Indirect Trade--The Hidden Market for US Food and Agriculture in the Baltic States – link

According to U.S. Census Bureau database for tracking bulk, intermediate, and consumer-oriented (BICO) exports, 2019 exports of U.S.-origin food and agricultural products to the three Baltic countries reached $279 million. However, combined 2019 import data from the three countries' National Statistical Offices (NSOs) reflect that 2019 U.S. food and agriculture imports were $166 million. The Baltic States are increasingly important transshipment hubs for U.S. products to markets throughout the former Soviet Union and as a result, BICO data overvalues them as markets for some U.S. food and agricultural exports. Conversely, BICO undervalues the Baltic markets for other U.S. products, which are shipped to the Baltic States via Western European ports of entry and are therefore counted as U.S. exports to those countries. Post expects that the NSOs' data provides a more accurate reflection of the true value of U.S. trade.

Overview of the Dutch Beer Market - link

The number of Dutch breweries has quadrupled over the past eight years, climbing to 800 in 2020 – producing, on average, nearly 2.4 billion liters per year. Craft breweries in the Netherlands are increasingly experimenting with new beers and beer styles. Over half of Dutch beer production is destined for export markets and this makes the Netherlands, after Mexico, the second largest beer exporter in the world. The United States is the Dutch industry's largest export market outside the European Union (EU). While craft beer from neighboring countries (e.g., Belgium and Germany) still dominate the import market, U.S. breweries are gaining popularity in the Dutch market. Overall beer consumption has been stable – the consumption of pilsners is declining while demand for alcohol-free (five percent of the market) and craft beer (10 percent of the market) continues to grow.

Thailand's Food Trends in 2021 – link

The global COVID-19 health crisis changed the behavior of consumers, increasing their preference towards products that support immune systems and enhance their wellness. At the same time, food and beverage products produced sustainably are becoming more popular as consumers become more aware of the impact the products they consume have on the environment.

El Salvador - e-Commerce flourishes with COVID-19 – link

Two years ago, Salvadoran consumers had few options for online purchases. Due to the pandemic, Salvadoran retailers had to quickly adapt and revamp their online platforms to reach consumers through apps or websites. These changes affected a wide swath of the consumer-oriented products and services sectors. This report highlights those new e-commerce players and how distribution channels have evolved.

European Commission Authorizes 8 GE Crops for Import – link

On January 22, 2021, the European Commission (EC) approved five genetically engineered (GE) crops (three corn and two soybeans) and renewed the authorization for three corn crops used for food and feed. The EC approves groups of events twice a year - during the December holiday season and in midsummer. These were the eight events remaining at the end of last year that were not yet authorized by the Commission. The eight authorizations and renewals were published in the European Union's Official Journal on January 26, 2021, and they remain valid for 10 years.

New Zealand and China Sign FTA Upgrade – link

On January 26, 2021, New Zealand and China signed an Upgrade to the 2008 Free Trade Agreement (FTA). For New Zealand, the FTA Upgrade retains all existing tariff reduction schedules for exports of goods to China. It also provides for additional tariff elimination on 12 wood and paper products over a 10-year implementation period. In addition to these tariff reductions, other areas that are covered in the FTA Upgrade and that apply to agricultural products include: technical barriers to trade; e-commerce; customs procedures; cooperation and trade facilitation; and rules of origin

Consumer Oriented Products Snacks – link

U.S. snack exports to Guatemala reached $18.9 million in 2019. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, sales of savory snacks grew by 10 percent in 2020, and retail volume sales grew by 5percent to reach 87,700 tons.

Food Processing Magazine
China, Exporters Spar over Coronavirus – link

China's restrictions on imports of frozen food, due to fears of the coronavirus being imported in food or on its packaging, are getting pushback from foreign suppliers who say it amounts to a restriction on trade. Chinese authorities have insisted for months that there is a danger of the coronavirus arriving in shipments of frozen food. It has imposed elaborate testing protocols that have lengthened the time it takes to clear incoming shipments from a week to a month.

Food Export's Blog
From the Field: In Market Representative Reports, January 2021 - link

Food Export's network of In-Market Representatives provide monthly reports on valuable information about what's going on in markets around the world, port situations and the latest industry trends.

Disclaimer: This list is by no means complete, for more information please refer to the links above.