

# Taste of America

## Buying U.S. Products

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## California Asparagus

### Sometimes Nothing Else Will Do!

From the fertile soils of the San Joaquin Delta region to the irrigated Southern California desert, California leads the United States in asparagus production with more than 45,000 metric tons harvested annually. Most of this is marketed as fresh green asparagus.

Asparagus was first planted in California during the 1850's. The moderate climate, together with a variety of fertile soil, contributes to the outstanding quality of asparagus grown in California.

Asparagus is delicious, beautiful, packed with nutrients and easy to prepare ahead for a crowd. Extremely versatile, this vegetable stands out whether served fresh with lemon juice, topped with hollandaise sauce, added fresh to a favorite salad or pureed for soup.



One serving of asparagus is low in calories and very low in sodium. It is an excellent source of folic acid and is a fairly significant source of Vitamin C, Thiamin and Vitamin B6. Asparagus contains no fat or cholesterol of dietary significance.

Asparagus is literally the growing shoot of a perennial plant raised in furrowed fields. Commercial plantings take two or more years to become established and require much hand labor in all phases.



Asparagus is harvested when the spears emerge in the springtime. Individual spears are harvested when they are approximately nine inches long with compact, tight heads and good green color. Each day, workers walk the furrows selecting choice spears and cutting them individually by hand.

While the harvest season lasts only 60 to 90 days in each traditional production area, California's wide range of climates allows for fresh asparagus to be available from January through May. A small amount is also harvested in September and October.

For more information visit <http://www.calasparagus.com>.



### Upcoming International Trade Shows

Looking for quality U.S. food and agricultural products? Visit the U.S.A. Pavilion or American Café at these upcoming international trade shows!

For more information on these shows, to find other shows with U.S. participation, or to learn more about "American Café" and trade missions, visit the FAS International Trade Show search engine at:

<http://www.fas.usda.gov/scripts/agexport/EventQuery.asp>.

<b>American Food Fair (National Restaurant Association)</b>	May 22-25, 2004	Chicago, USA
<b>Exphotel</b>	June 9-11, 2004	Cancun, Mexico
<b>ABASTUR</b>	September 29-October 1	Mexico City, Mexico
<b>Boa Mesa</b>	September 29-October 3	Sao Paulo, Brazil

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## Value Enhanced Grains: Solutions For Buyers!

The Value Enhanced Grains (VEG) market is a fast-paced, ever growing opportunity to provide new solutions—both economic and environmental—to the farm, feed, and food sectors. Indeed, VEG marketing channels continue to develop, with attention focused now more than ever on the needs of the buyer. Feed manufacturers, corn refiners, and food processors—not to mention farmers and food consumers—all benefit from the development of VEG.

Advances in VEG range from genetics and biotechnology to identity-preserved and value-enhanced marketing channels. Both these processes make it possible to deliver very specific commodity traits to the buyer. On the technology front, there is a new focus on "stacking" multiple end-use traits. In this regard, products with both animal-health and food-safety implications are on the horizon.

VEGs are grains with particular quality characteristics that add end-user value. They fall into one of two categories:



**Compositional Traits:** Where the grain has been bred or engineered to provide specific characteristics such as high oil, a specific composition or amino acids, a particular level of amylopectin starch; or

**Management and Handling Traits:** Whereby the grain has been produced and controlled in such a way as to enhance characteristics such as low-stress cracks, organic crops, grain that is free from pesticides, etc.

Feeders, millers and processors use VEGs when they are seeking characteristics such as increased energy content (high oil), elevated protein levels, uniform kernel size and hardness or increased starch content and purity. A range of corn and grain sorghum products is available to meet a variety of needs.



For more information, visit the U.S. Grains Council's Web site at <http://www.vegrains.org>.

## Helpful Hint

**How to find more information:  
Organic Products and Biotechnology.**

USDA-FAS offers information to facilitate exports and educate buyers about both of these fast growing markets.

**FAS Organic Products Web Site:** U.S. organic products and the National Organic Program (NOP):  
<http://www.fas.usda.gov/agx/organics/organics.html>.

**FAS Biotechnology and U.S. trade Web site:**  
<http://www.fas.usda.gov/itp/biotech/index.html>.

## Milk Is Only The Beginning: U.S. Dairy Industry Meets Your Needs

The U.S. Dairy Export Council (USDEC) is a non-profit independent membership organization that represents the interests of U.S. milk producers, dairy cooperatives, proprietary processors, export traders and industry suppliers.



From butter to buttermilk powder to butter oil, the U.S. dairy industry produces it all!

USDEC has an online supplier database to help international buyers find U.S. suppliers of not just milk but also butter, cheese, whey, ice cream, yogurt, cream, lactose and more.

USDEC offers a range of publications to help educate buyers about their products including a *Reference Manual for U.S. Cheese*. Designed to guide and educate users of U.S. cheese products, the manual includes complete information on: the cheese making process; varieties of cheese; packaging of cheese; cheese cutting and handling; storage conditions; purchasing and shipping; U.S. Government inspection process and standards; nutritive content of cheese; and a glossary. The manual is available in English, Spanish, Chinese, Japanese and Korean.

Other reference manual publications include:

- U.S. Cheese as Ingredients
- U.S. Milk Powders
- U.S. Whey and Lactose Products

For more information on U.S. dairy products and to find a supplier, visit <http://www.usdec.org>.

## For More Information On Buying U.S. Products Contact:

- Your [local FAS overseas office](#) or
- [Claire Klotz](#), Agricultural Marketing Specialist, FAS Washington, DC at (202) 720-8557.



*Taste of America*, a quarterly on-line publication of USDA-FAS-AgExport Services Division (AGX), provides international buyers with news and information about U.S. food and agriculture products, companies and associations.



AGX seeks to increase the sales of U.S. food, farm, seafood, and forest products to overseas markets by linking U.S. exporters with international buyers. For more information on these services visit <http://www.fas.usda.gov/buying.html>.