

Commodity Highlight: Fresh Snap Beans

The United States is the world's top producer of snap beans, with about 60 percent of output according to data from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). France, Mexico, Iraq, and Argentina round out the top five producers. In the United States, snap beans are largely produced for three distinct markets--fresh, canning, and freezing. Fresh-market production accounts for about 25 percent of the 2.1 billion pounds produced. Canning is the most intensive use, with 50 percent of all snap beans destined for canneries. Because of higher prices received, the fresh market commands two-thirds, or \$250 million, of all farm cash receipts for snap beans.

Fresh-market snap bean output began to rise in the early 1990s after remaining fairly stable the previous two decades. Spurred by strong demand, fresh production in 1998-2000 was 90 percent higher than 1988-1990.

Grown in every State, some 9,118 farms (1997 Census of Agriculture) produce fresh and processing snap beans in the United States—down 16 percent from 1992. In 2000, Florida was the leading fresh-market source, with nearly half of the fresh crop. Georgia (13 percent) and California (9 percent) were the next largest fresh suppliers.

The United States is the world's leading exporter and importer of snap beans, and a net exporter of fresh snap beans. In the 1990s, the U.S. exported 11 percent of fresh-market supply, while 9 percent of fresh consumption was satisfied through imports. Although imports (up 49 percent between 1988/90 and 1998/2000) have trended higher over the past few decades, exports (up 114 percent) have more than kept pace. U.S. export volume is generally steady from October through July, but declines sharply in August

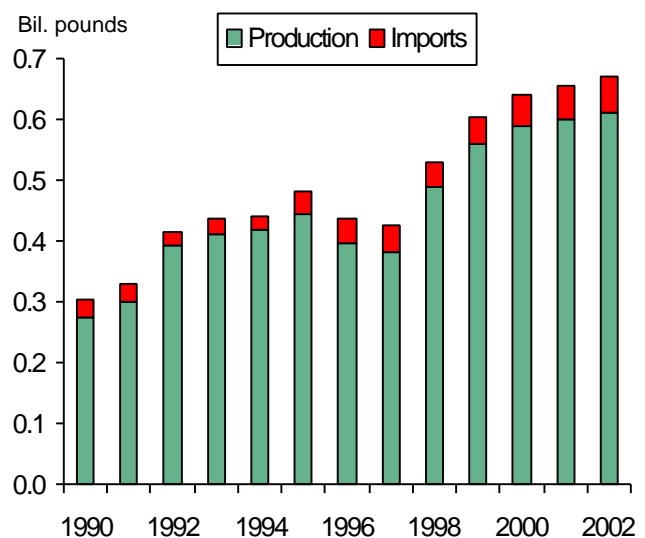
and September when Canadian snap bean production peaks.

Fresh imports are strongest December through March when U.S. production is limited by cool weather, and weakest in the summer during the height of the domestic season. About 92 percent of import volume arrives from Mexico while about 80 percent of exports are normally shipped to Canada.

U.S. consumption of fresh snap beans averaged 519 million pounds annually during 1998-2000—up 83 percent from 1988-90. Since stumbling to a record-low 1.1 pounds in 1990, per capita consumption of fresh-market snap beans has trended higher. Per capita use climbed to 2.1 pounds in 2001—the highest since 1964, but well below the record-high 5.3 pounds reached in 1943.

Figure 8

U.S. snap beans, fresh-market: Supply, 1990-2002



Source: National Agricultural Statistics Service, USDA and Bureau of the Census. U.S. Department of Commerce.

Table 9--U.S. snap beans, fresh-market: Supply, utilization, and price, farm weight

Year	Supply			Utilization			Season-average price		
	Production 1/	Imports 2/	Total	Exports 2/	Domestic	Per capita use	Current dollars 1/	Constant dollars 3/	
	-- Million pounds --						Pounds	-- \$/cwt --	
1980	304.4	25.4	329.8	30.4	299.4	1.3	27.30	47.57	
1990	273.8	30.0	303.8	36.5	267.3	1.1	36.83	42.57	
1998	488.3	42.8	531.1	75.4	455.7	1.7	48.90	47.38	
1999	560.7	43.8	604.5	72.1	532.4	1.9	46.50	44.43	
2000	589.4	49.5	638.9	69.6	569.3	2.0	42.60	39.80	
2001	601.8	55.0	656.8	55.0	601.8	2.1	45.40	41.46	
2002 f	615.0	60.0	675.0	65.0	610.0	2.1	--	--	

-- = Not available. f = ERS forecast. 1/ Source: National Agricultural Statistics Service, USDA. 2/ Source: Bureau of the Census, U.S. Department of Commerce. 3/ Constant-dollar prices were calculated using the GDP implicit price deflator, 1996=100.