

Commodity Highlight: Honeydew Melons

Honeydew melons (*Cucumis melo*, var. *inodorous*), like all melons, are members of the cucurbit (gourd) family and are most closely related to casaba, crenshaw, and winter melons. Honeydews are thought to have their roots near Iran (Persia) and/or West Africa. Although there are no world data specific to honeydew melons, the United States ranks third (a 6-percent share) in the output of cantaloup and miscellaneous melons (including honeydew), behind China and Turkey.

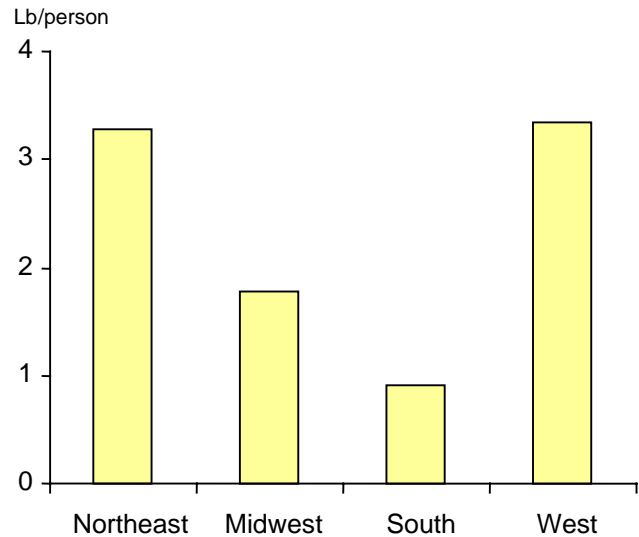
The U.S. farm value of honeydew melons averaged \$94 million during 2001-03. During this 3-year period, California produced 76 percent of the Nation's honeydews, followed by Arizona (14 percent) and Texas (10 percent). About 43 percent of California's honeydews are produced in Fresno County, followed by Sutter County with 20 percent.

Although gains have slowed over the past decade, average per capita consumption of honeydew melons has increased each decade since the 1960s. Between 1990-93 and 2000-03, per capita use rose 9 percent. Since 1980-83, consumption has risen 29 percent, with per capita use peaking at a record 2.5 pounds in 1999. ERS estimates suggest that honeydew consumption will total 623 million pounds in 2004—up 1 percent from a year earlier but 11 percent below the 1999 peak.

According to a USDA food consumption survey, an estimated 30 percent of honeydews are consumed away from home in restaurants (those with table service) and other away-from-home eating establishments, such as cafeterias. The away-from-home share for honeydew, a popular breakfast and salad bar item, was nearly twice as large as for either cantaloup or watermelon, which were each 15 percent of sales.

Honeydew melons are popular among adults of both sexes, but are not as interesting to children. Asian and white consumers are major consumers of honeydews, while Blacks and Hispanics consume much less per capita. Per capita use is greatest in the Northeast and

U.S. honeydew melons: Estimated regional use, 2003



Source: Economic Research Service, USDA.

the West (both consumed 3.3 pounds per person in 2003) and lowest in the South (0.9 pounds).

A greater share of the gain in consumption since 1990-93 appears to be linked to increasing imports. While domestic production increased 17 percent during this time, imports are estimated to have risen 26 percent. As with cantaloup, the emergence of year-round demand and availability has helped fuel a portion of the gains in both domestic use and import demand.

From December to April, honeydew availability in the United States depends almost entirely on imports. Imports accounted for 27 percent of annual consumption during 2001-03 compared with 25 percent in 1991-93 and 11 percent during 1981-83. Mexico, Guatemala, Costa Rica, and Honduras account for the lion's share of imports of mixed melons (of which honeydews comprise an estimated 45 percent).

For the most recent information, see: <http://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/vgs>

Table 21--U.S. honeydew melons: Supply, disappearance, and price

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 --	
1970	193.1	18.9	212.0	26.2	185.8	0.91	5.66	20.56
1980	318.0	26.5	344.5	22.1	322.4	1.42	13.50	24.98
1990	450.3	115.0	565.3	49.6	515.7	2.06	18.00	22.06
2000	500.8	174.1	674.9	46.8	628.1	2.22	19.20	19.20
2001	457.6	139.9	597.5	48.6	548.9	1.92	21.10	20.61
2002	512.7	171.5	684.2	47.3	636.9	2.21	18.00	17.32
2003	492.8	163.9	656.7	39.4	617.3	2.12	18.90	17.89
2004 f	510.0	158.4	668.4	45.1	623.3	2.12	--	--

-- = Not available. f = ERS forecast. 1/ Source: National Agricultural Statistics Service, USDA. Production data were adjusted by ERS for 1970-80 to account for States not included in NASS estimates. 2/ Estimated by ERS based on shipment share of the "other melon" trade category reported by the Bureau of the Census, USDC. 3/ Constant-dollar prices calculated using GDP deflator, 2000=100.