Commodity Profile: Cabbage

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Overview
New York, California and Texas are the largest producers of U.S. fresh-market cabbage, although all 50 states produce cabbage commercially. According to the FAO, China and India are the world’s largest cabbage producers, with China alone accounting for over one-third of world production in 2001.

By USDA Economic Research Service estimates, coleslaw accounts for 40 to 45 percent of cabbage utilization in the United States, fresh head cabbage accounts for 35 percent, and other various fresh-cut products account for 5 to 10 percent. The other important use of cabbage is sauerkraut, which accounts for 12 percent of cabbage utilization. As there is little overlap between the fresh cabbage and sauerkraut markets, these two commodities will be discussed separately.

Demand
Domestic fresh cabbage consumption varied from 1970 to 2001 (Figure 1). Consumption was 8.7 pounds per capita 1970. In 1980, consumption reached a low of 7.6 pounds per capita. In 1987 it rose to 9.1 pounds, peaking in 1993 at 9.3 pounds. Per capita consumption subsequently declined but rebounded in 2000 and 2001, reaching 9.0 pounds per capita in both years. According to the USDA, the increase in cabbage consumption in 2000 and 2001 is attributable to the marketing of fresh-cut products, including fresh slaw products and the use of red cabbage in fresh-cut salad mixes; growth in away-from-home eating (affects coleslaw consumption); and nutritional research showing the benefits of cruciferous vegetables.

Domestic consumption of canned cabbage (sauerkraut) has declined since 1970, from 2.3 pounds per capita in 1970 to 1.3 pounds per capita in 2001. Consumption peaked in 1971 at 2.5 pounds and then followed a downward trend until reaching its lowest point in 1996 at 1.0 pounds per capita.

Although the United States is a net exporter of cabbage, trade is not a major factor in the cabbage industry. The United States exported only 3.4 percent of domestic production in 2002. Total U.S. cabbage exports are comprised mostly of fresh cabbage and were valued at $22.5 million in 2002 (Figure 2). The largest market for U.S. cabbage
was Canada, which received over $20.2 million, or 90 percent, of U.S. cabbage exports in 2002. Japan and Mexico were the next largest destinations for U.S. cabbage. In 2002, Japan received over $1.1 million in U.S. cabbage and Mexico received $717,117.

Fresh cabbage made up over 87 percent of U.S. cabbage exports in 2002. Fresh cabbage exports have increased since 1989, when they were only $2.2 million. Exports peaked in 1998 at $20.9 million before declining to $16.1 in 1999. By 2002 exports had risen to $19.7 million. The largest destination for U.S. fresh cabbage was Canada, which received $17.6 million in fresh cabbage from the United States. Japan and Mexico were other important destinations for U.S. fresh cabbage.

The largest customer for U.S. sauerkraut was Canada, which received $2.6 million, or over 91 percent of sauerkraut exports in 2002. Japan and Mexico were the second and third largest markets, respectively, for U.S. sauerkraut.

Supply

In the United States, New York, California and Texas are the largest producers of fresh-market cabbage. In 2002, the three states combined to produce 47.8 percent of the nation’s 24.4 million cwt of fresh cabbage. New York, alone, produced over 4.1 million cwt, or almost 17 percent, of total fresh cabbage. In 2002 total fresh cabbage production was down 6.3 percent from a 10-year high of 26.1 million cwt in 2001 (Table 1). The value of U.S. fresh-market cabbage in 2002 was $301.5 million, down from over $340.2 in 2001.

In 2002 the average domestic inflation-adjusted price for fresh-market cabbage (in 1996 dollars) was $11.52 per cwt (Table 1), down from $12.44 per cwt in 2001. Since 1992, when the average fresh cabbage price was $9.92 (1996 dollars), prices have generally increased.

Cabbage enters the United States under a 0.54 cent per kilogram tariff for countries not granted preferential trade status. Sauerkraut imports into the United States face a 4.8 percent ad valorem tariff for countries not granted preferential trade status.

Total imports of cabbage (fresh and sauerkraut) were $14.9 million in 2002, down 2 percent from 2001, when imports peaked at $15.2 million (Figure 3). The largest sources of U.S. cabbage imports were Mexico and Canada. Imports from Canada in 2002 were valued at $8.1 million and accounted for 54.2 percent of total cabbage imports. Mexico exported almost $5 million in cabbage to the United States in 2002, comprising one-third of all imports. All of the imports from Mexico were fresh cabbage.

Fresh cabbage, valued at $13.3 million in 2002, made up 89 percent of total U.S. cabbage imports. Canada was the largest source of fresh cabbage imported into the U.S. in 2002 when cabbage imports from Canada were valued at over $7.7 million.

Sauerkraut imports totaled $1.6 million in 2002. Germany provided two-thirds ($1.1 million) of U.S. sauerkraut imports in 2002, a 101.6 percent increase from 2001. More than 30 percent of the sauerkraut imports came from Canada and Poland, making them the other important sources of U.S. sauerkraut imports.
Sources


Tables and Figures

Table 1. U.S. Fresh* Cabbage Acreage, Production, Value, and Real Price, 1992-2002

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<td>Harvested Acres</td>
<td>82,150</td>
<td>79,550</td>
<td>80,900</td>
<td>81,300</td>
<td>71,920</td>
<td>75,230</td>
<td>76,280</td>
<td>74,450</td>
<td>78,490</td>
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<td>Production (1,000 cwt)</td>
<td>23,267</td>
<td>25,360</td>
<td>25,511</td>
<td>22,994</td>
<td>22,900</td>
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<td>21,800</td>
<td>25,990</td>
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<td>Value ($1,000)</td>
<td>207,108</td>
<td>284,121</td>
<td>232,207</td>
<td>260,644</td>
<td>228,972</td>
<td>273,032</td>
<td>303,695</td>
<td>240,866</td>
<td>313,692</td>
<td>340,241</td>
<td>301,482</td>
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* Data collection for sauerkraut was discontinued by the USDA.

(Source: National Agricultural Statistics Service)
Figure 3: U.S. Cabbage Imports, in million $, 1989-2002
(Source: U.S. Customs Service)