



Commodity Profile: Cherries, Sweet and Tart

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Overview

Cherries are consumed in a variety of ways, including fresh, frozen, canned, and as juice, wine, brined or dried. There are two main types of cherries produced in the United States—sweet cherries and tart or “sour” cherries. In recent years, two-thirds of the sweet cherries produced have been destined for the fresh market, with the remaining one-third used for processing. Of the sweet cherries that are processed, 65 percent are brined. With regard to tart cherries, 99 percent of production is utilized for processing, with the majority processed as a frozen product (71 percent). A total of 22 percent of tart cherries are canned and the remainder (those neither frozen nor canned) are used for juice, wine, brined and dried products (National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS)).

The marketing season for U.S. sweet cherries last from early May to mid August, while the marketing season for tart cherries lasts from mid June to late August (NASS). In 2004, Washington, California, Oregon and Michigan were the main sweet cherry producing states, accounting for over 97 percent of the quantity produced nationwide. The main tart cherry producing state in 2004 was Michigan, which alone accounted for 70 percent of tart cherry production. Other, smaller, tart cherry producing states included Utah and Washington, accounting for roughly 10 percent each.

Demand

Cherries have been a popular fruit crop for consumption in the United States for many years and more recent attention on the health benefits of cherries and other fruits and vegetables has helped boost consumption. Cherries in particular have been found to offer a good source of antioxidants and contain compounds believed to aid in pain relief of arthritis, gout, and headaches (ERS 2002).

Over the last few decades, total cherry consumption in the United States has remained relatively stable. Peak consumption of cherries occurred in 1987 at 2.2 pounds per

capita, and reached a low of 1.3 pounds in 1991 and again in 1996. In 2003 per capita consumption of cherries was 1.8 pounds (Figure 1).

In the last few years, consumption of fresh cherries has grown at a faster rate than that of frozen cherries and consumption of canned cherries has decreased. Since 1994, fresh consumption increased from 0.52 pounds per capita to 0.92 in 2003 while frozen cherry consumption actually decreased during the same period from 0.72 to 0.63 pounds. However, frozen cherry consumption had reached a level slightly greater than that of fresh cherries in 2002 with 0.95 pounds per capita. Canned cherry consumption has historically been lower than frozen and fresh consumption. In 2003, canned consumption was 0.24 pounds per capita, up from its 2002 low.

Supply

In 2004 the United States was the largest producer of cherries in the world, accounting for 14 percent of world production. Turkey and Iran followed closely behind, with 13 percent and 12 percent of world production respectively. Germany, Russia, and Italy rounded out the top 6 producers in 2004, accounting for about 5 to 7 percent each (Figure 2).

Since 1992, total U.S. cherry bearing acreage has increased from just under 100,000 acres to 115,000 acres. Acreage of sweet cherries has been the main cause for the increase, rising from 46,000 acres to 78,000 acres, while acreage of tart cherries decreased over the same time, from 48,000 acres to 37,000 (Figure 3). Michigan accounted for 73 percent of bearing acreage of tart cherries. The state with the next greatest acreage of bearing tart cherries was Utah, accounting for 7.6 percent followed by New York and Wisconsin with 5 percent each. Washington led the nation in sweet cherry bearing acreage with 29,000 acres in 2004, or 37 percent of the total. California is close second with 33 percent and Oregon was ranked third with 15 percent.

The value of cherry production has increased since the early 1990s, from \$230.6 million in 1980 to \$506.8 million in 2004, with most of the increase due to sweet cherry production. About 86 percent of the total value in 2004 was attributable to sweet cherry production. Tart cherry production was valued at \$69.6 million (Figure 4).

The quantity of all cherries produced has increased since 1980, from 566 million pounds to 779 million in 2004. Bad weather devastated the 2002 U.S. cherry crop and the quantity produced fell to 425 million pounds, more than a 40 percent lower than the previous years production (NASS). Current (2004) production levels rebounded from the 2002 drop thanks to more favorable weather and an increase in sweet cherry production, which partially offset a decline in tart cherry production (Figure 5).

Exports

Globally, the United States was the largest exporter of cherries in 2004, accounting for 21.2 percent of world trade, just ahead of Turkey, which accounted for 20.7 percent (FAO). Austria was the third largest, accounting for 11.7 percent, with Spain, Chile and Poland rounding out the top 6, each with less than 10 percent (Figure 6).

In terms of value, the United States is a net exporter of cherries, with 84 percent of all exports being fresh sweet cherries. In 2004, the United States was a net exporter of cherries by more than \$150 million, attributable in large part to fresh sweet cherry exports. However, imports showed a marked increase in the early part of the new millennium (Figure 7).

In 2004 Japan was the largest market for U.S. cherry exports overall, followed by Canada and Taiwan. Japan accounted for \$85.5 million or 39 percent of the \$221.4 million in total exports, although exports to Japan have been variable over the years and peaked in 1995 at \$118 million. Cherry exports to Canada increased in recent years, passing the \$50 million dollar mark in 2003 and increasing from \$20.3 million in 1998 to \$54.9 million in 2004. Canada accounted for 25 percent of total U.S. exports in 2004 while Taiwan ranked third with just under \$22 million, or 9 percent of total exports (Figure 8). By value, fresh cherries accounted for 96.6 percent of total U.S. cherry exports to Japan, 89.5 percent of the cherry exports to Taiwan and 80.9 percent of the cherry exports to Canada.

Imports

The world's largest importer of cherries in 2004 was Russia, accounting for roughly 15 percent of world imports, followed by Austria and Germany with 12 percent each. The United Kingdom was ranked fourth with 8 percent of world cherry imports. The United States ranked as the 10th largest importing country and imports accounted for 3 percent of the world total (FAO).

U.S. imports are negligible in comparison to exports, but they increased in the early 2000s, reaching \$37 million in 2002, up from \$19 million just one year prior. In 2004 U.S. imports were valued somewhat lower at \$30 million. Most of the recent increase in imports came from fresh cherry imports from Chile and smaller increases in frozen tart cherry imports from Poland and Canada and preserved cherries from Italy. In 2004, Chile accounted for 53 percent of U.S. imports (Figure 9).

Price

Sweet cherry prices (in year-2000 inflation-adjusted dollars) have increased over the years since 1980, from 52.1 cents per pound in 1980 to a high of 78.7 cents per pound in 1996. Prices in 2004 were slightly lower at about 72.0 cents per pound. Prices for tart cherries historically have been lower than those of sweet cherries except in 1981 and again in 1983, when the average tart cherry price increased dramatically, exceeding sweet cherry prices. In 2004, tart cherries were valued at about 30.0 cents per pound (Figure 10).

Sources

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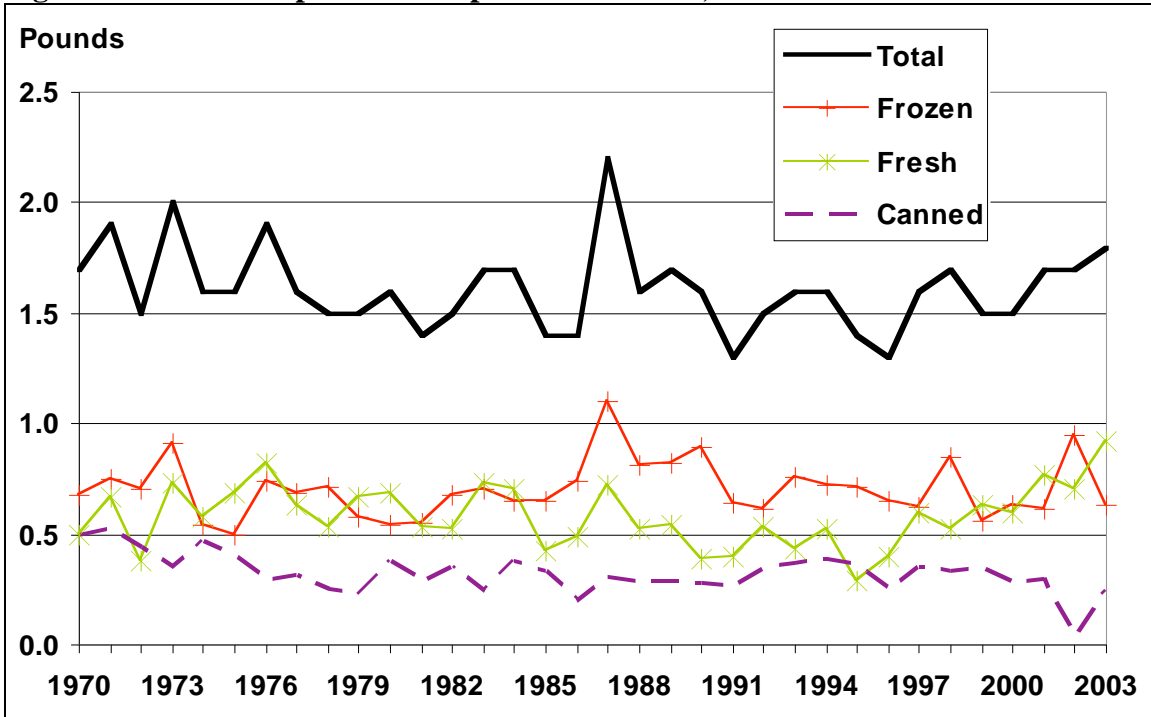
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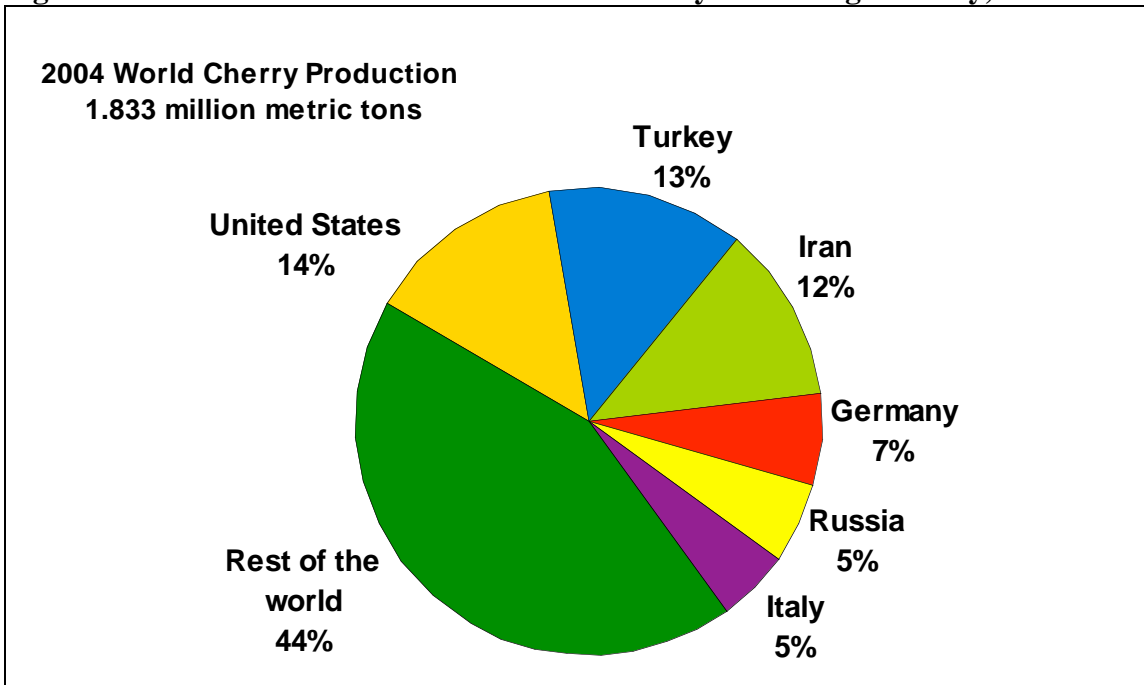
FIGURES

Figure 1. U.S. Per Capita Consumption of Cherries, 1970-2004



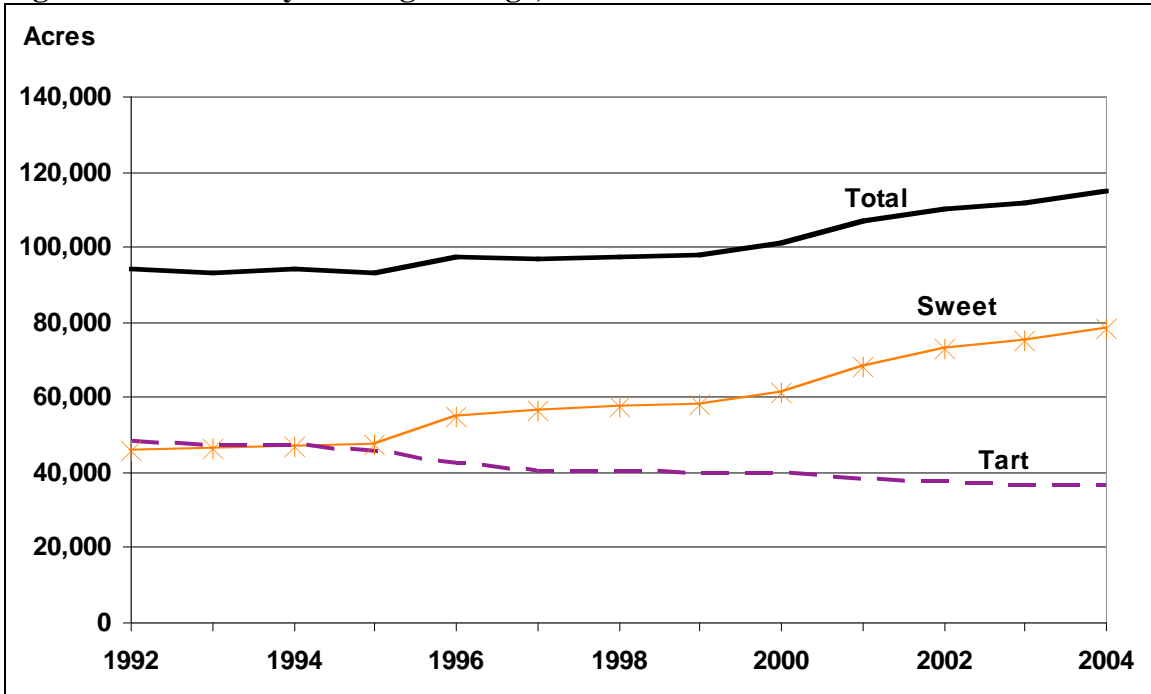
Source: USDA Economic Research Service, Per Capita Data System

Figure 2. Share of World Production of Cherries by Producing Country, 2004



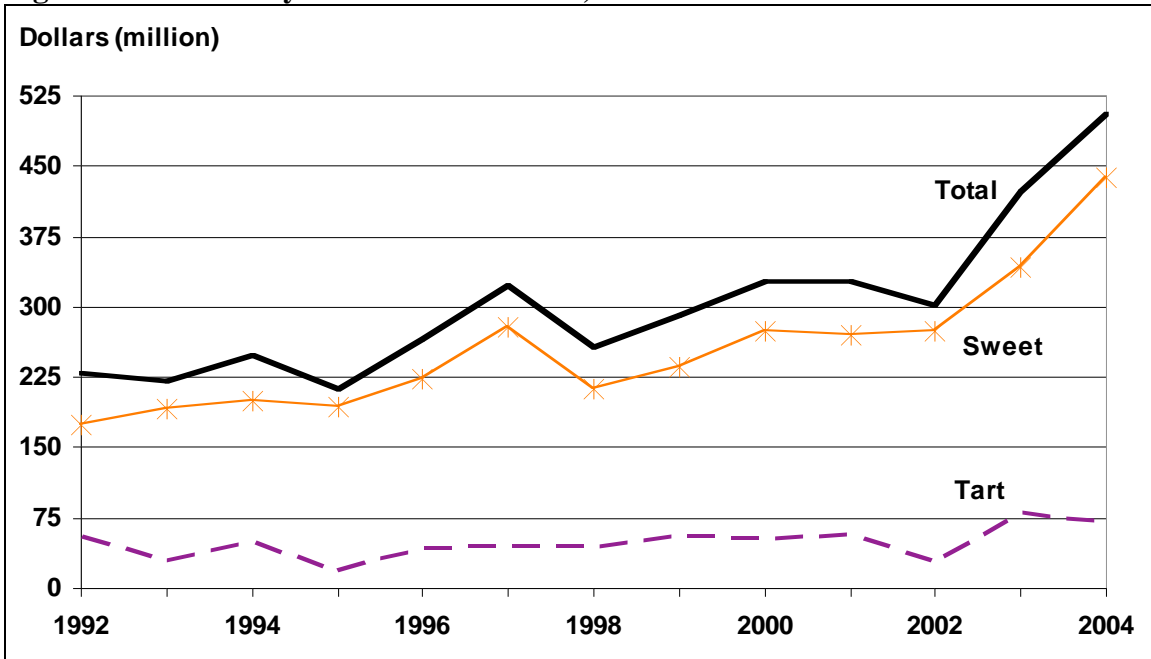
Source: Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

Figure 3. U.S. Cherry Bearing Acreage, 1992-2004



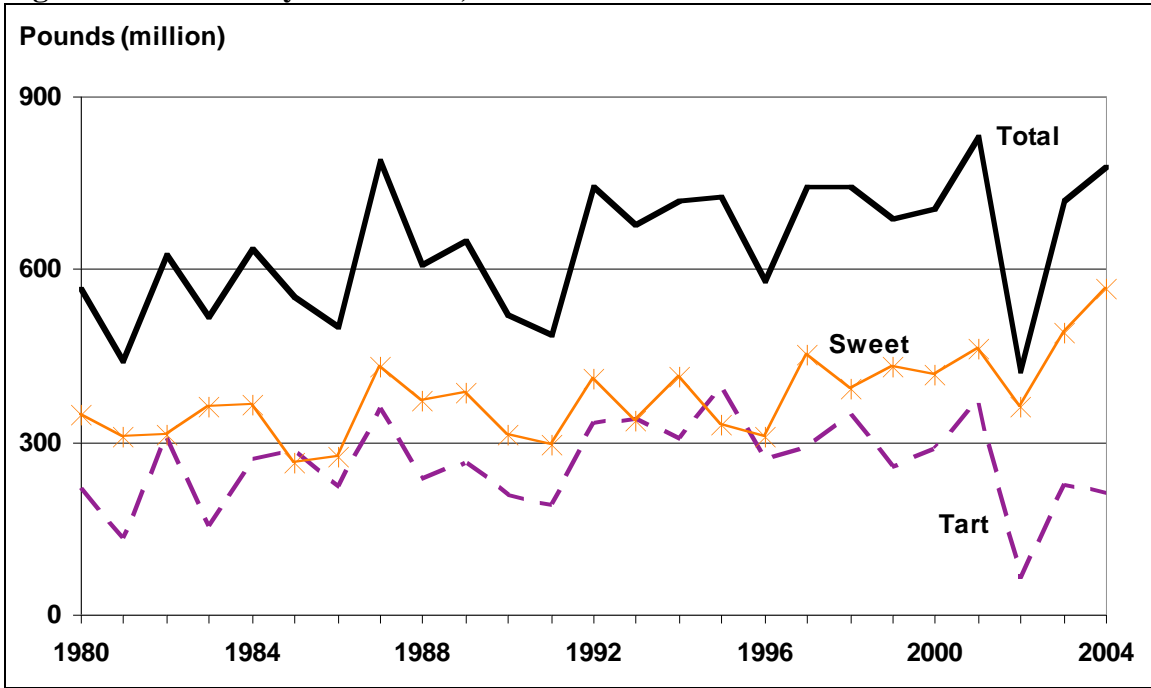
Source: USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service, Noncitrus Fruits and Nuts Annual Summary

Figure 4. U.S. Cherry Value of Production, 1992-2004



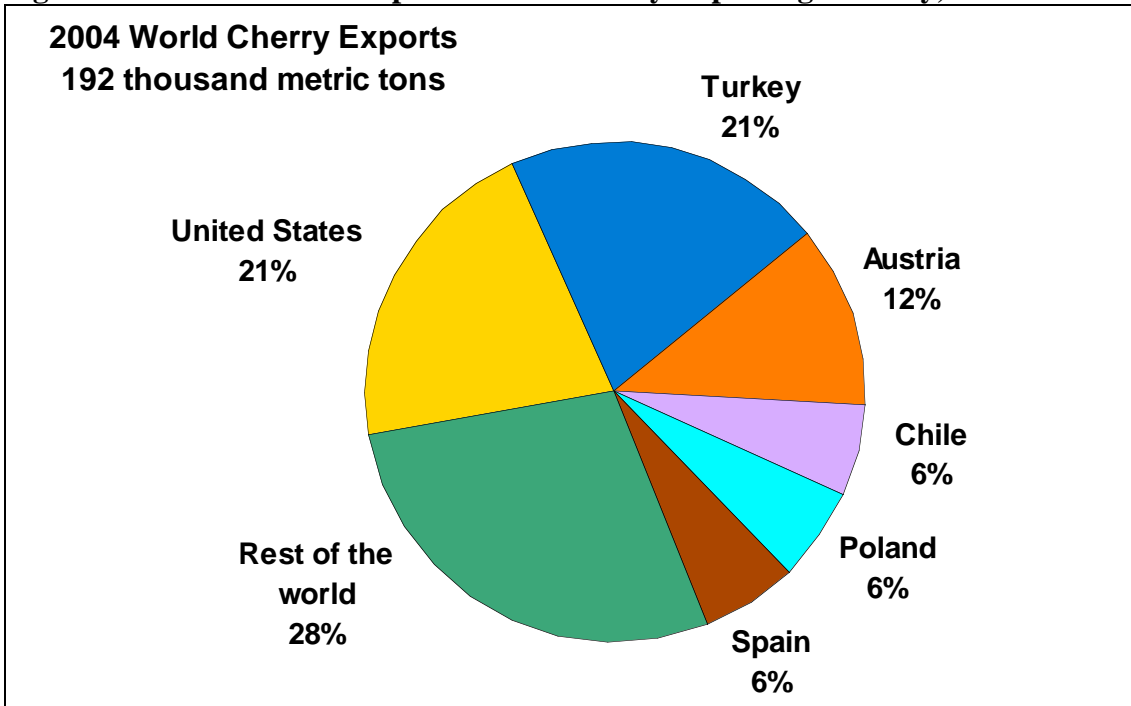
Source: USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service, Noncitrus fruits and Nuts Annual Summary

Figure 5. U.S. Cherry Production, 1980-2004



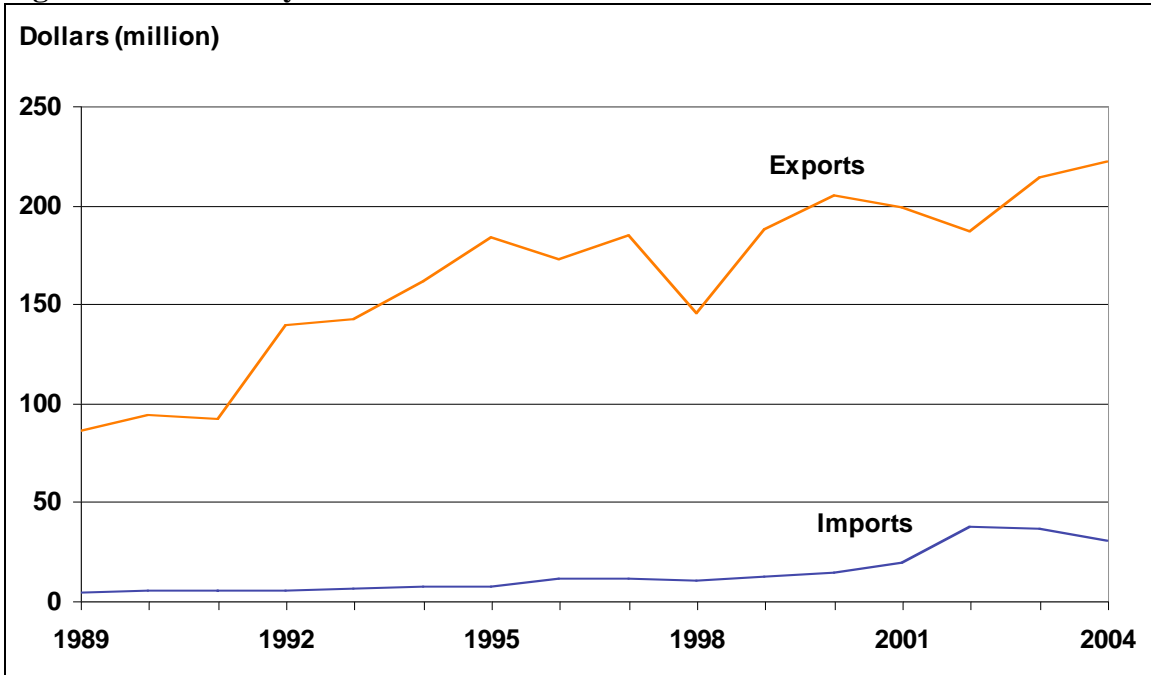
Source: USDA Economic Research Service, Fruit and Tree Nut Yearbook

Figure 6. Share of World Exports of Cherries by Exporting Country, 2004



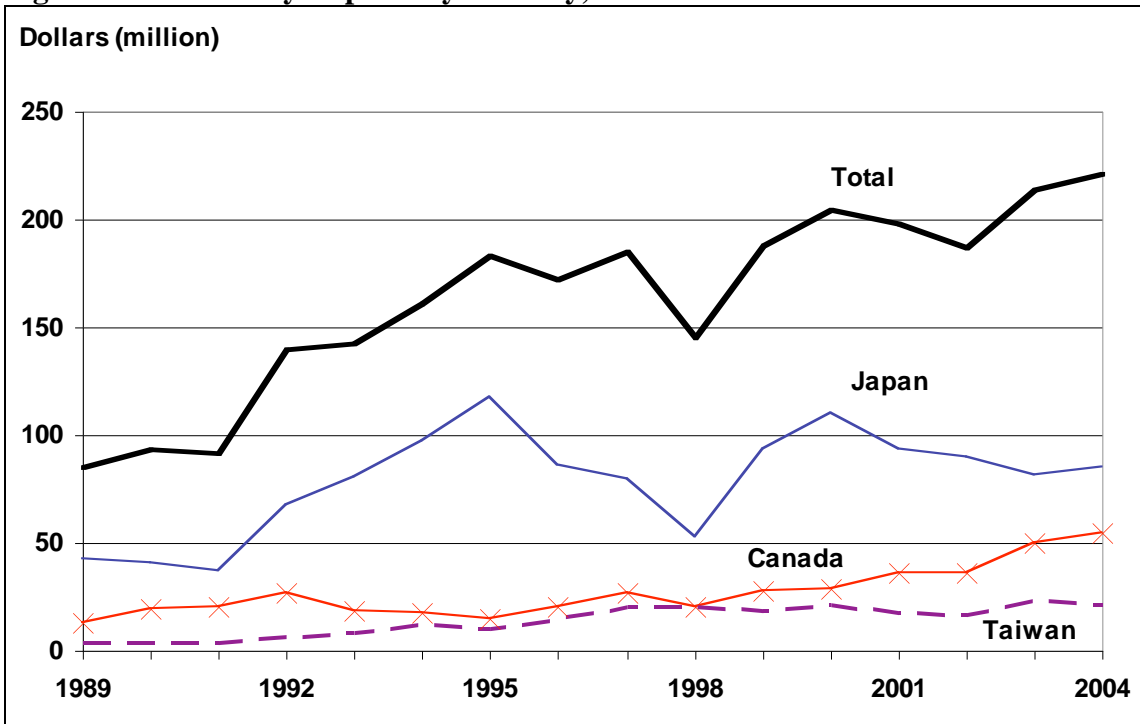
Source: Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

Figure 7. U.S. Cherry Trade of All Cherries 1989-2004



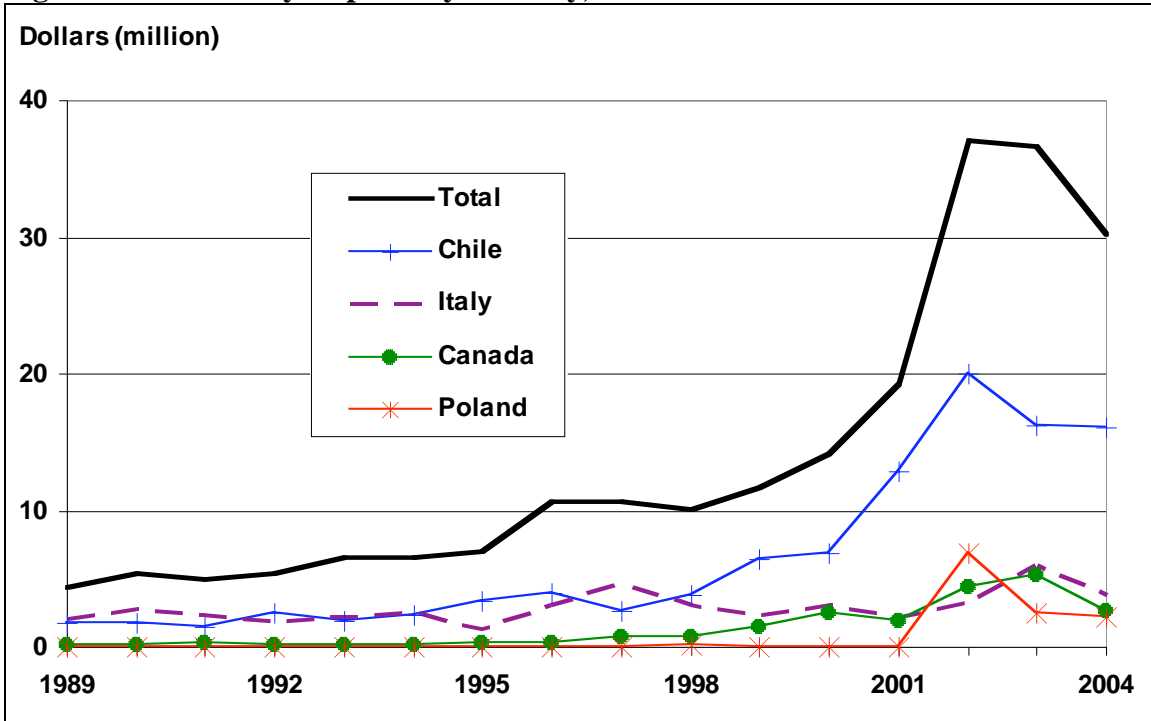
Source: USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

Figure 8. U.S. Cherry Exports by Country, 1989-004



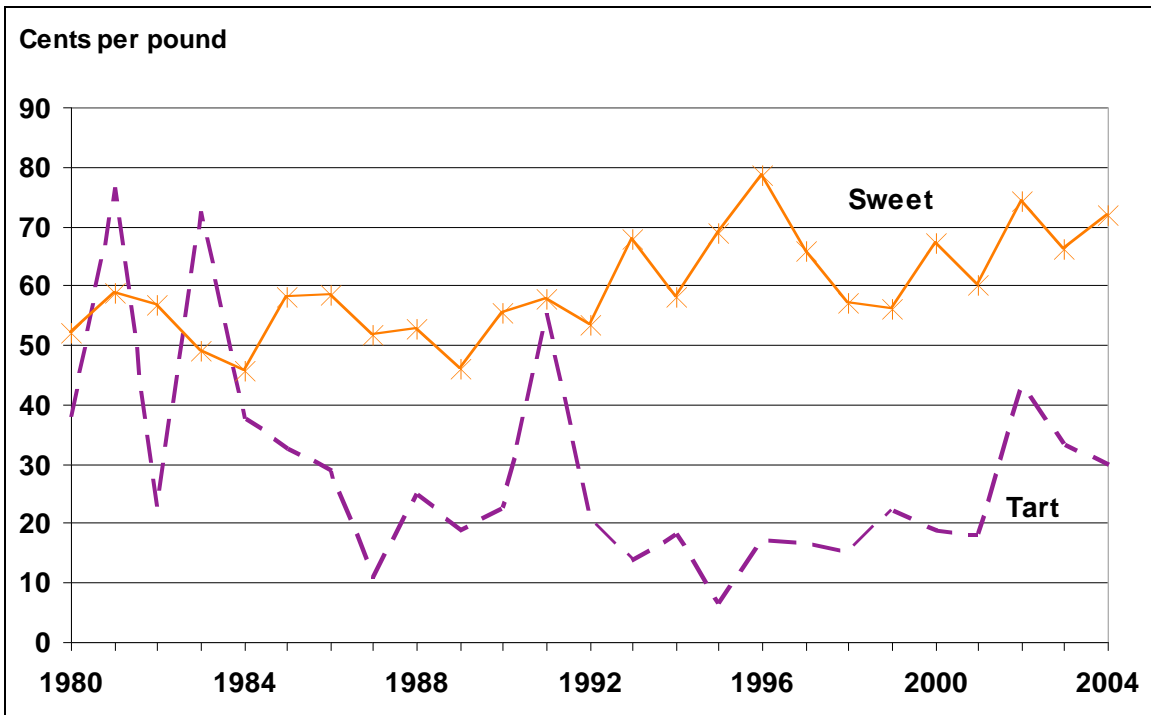
Source: USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

Figure 9. U.S. Cherry Imports by Country, 1989-2004



Source: USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

Figure 10. U.S. Cherry Season-Average Grower Price (year-2000 dollars), 1980-2004



Source: USDA Economic Research Service, Fruit and Tree Nut Yearbook