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Commodity Profile: Cauliflower

*by Hayley Boriss, Junior Specialist
Henrich Brunke, Assistant Specialist
Marcia Kreith, Program Analyst
University of California
agissues@ucdavis.edu*

Overview

The cauliflower, or “cabbage flower,” originated over 2,000 years ago in the Mediterranean and Asia Minor region. Now produced and widely available in the United States, cauliflower belongs to the same family of cruciferous vegetables as cabbage, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, kale, and bok choy. It is a cool season crop that thrives in a moist atmosphere. It is available year-round, although especially plentiful in the spring and fall. Cauliflower is a low-calorie vegetable, high in fiber, folacin, potassium and vitamin C.

Demand

U.S. per capita consumption of cauliflower has decreased from its peak of 3.1 pounds per capita in 1986 through 1989 to 2 pounds per capita in 2003. Of the total, the share of cauliflower consumed fresh has increased from 60 percent in 1970 to 85 percent in 2003 (Figure 1). Frozen cauliflower consumption totaled almost 0.4 pounds per capita in 2003 compared to fresh consumption of 1.7 pounds.

Exports

The world’s largest exporter of cauliflower is Spain which accounted for 36 percent of world exports in 2003. The second largest exporter was France, accounting for 22 percent of world exports. The United States ranked third with 11 percent (Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO)).

In 2004 the United States was a net exporter of cauliflower by nearly \$30 million (exports minus imports). Exports of cauliflower peaked in 1995 at \$71.8 million but decreased to \$61.7 million by 2004. The leading export markets for U.S. cauliflower were Canada, Japan and Mexico, respectively accounting for 72 percent (\$44.4 million), 22 percent (\$13.3 million), and 4 percent (\$2.2 million) of total exports. Since 1995 cauliflower exports to Japan have decreased, while in recent years exports to Canada have increase. In 1999, Canada became the leading export market for the United States

over Japan (Figure 2). Mexico has remained the third largest export market, but has consistently accounted for less than 5 percent of total export value.

Supply

In 2004 China was the world's largest producer of cauliflower, accounting for 44 percent of total production followed by India with 29 percent of the world total. The third largest producer was Spain, accounting for 3 percent. The United States ranked sixth with 2 percent, behind Italy and France (Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO)).

In the United States, California is the largest cauliflower producing state, accounting for 87 of total harvested acreage (National Agricultural Statistical Service (NASS)). Arizona and New York also produce cauliflower but in much smaller amounts. California production is concentrated mainly in the central coast region of Monterey county.

Total U.S. acreage of cauliflower has decreased from its peak of nearly 68,000 acres in 1986 to nearly 42,000 by 2004 (Figure 3). However, yields continued to increase throughout the 1990s, from 125 hundredweight per acre in 1992 to 170 hundredweight in 2004, after peaking at 183 hundredweight in 2000 (Figure 4).

The value of production of cauliflower has increased and remained high in recent years despite declining acreage in part because of the increasing yields and stable prices. Roughly 97 percent of the total value of cauliflower production came from the fresh market. The value of fresh market cauliflower increased to \$222.7 million in 2004, an increase of over \$156 million from \$66.1 million in 1979. The value of cauliflower used for processing has remained much lower than that of fresh at about \$7.8 million in 2004 (Figure 5).

Prices

Between 1980 and 1990, the price of fresh cauliflower has decreased (in inflation adjusted year-2000 dollars) while the price of processing cauliflower has slightly increased, narrowing the gap between the two (Figure 6). In 2004 the price for fresh cauliflower was \$30.5 per cwt and the price of cauliflower for processing was \$22.09 per cwt.

Imports

In recent years the value of U.S. imports of cauliflower has increased, nearly doubling in the last 3 years, from \$16.7 million in 2001 to a high of \$32 million in 2004 (Figure 7). The majority of imported cauliflower was supplied by Mexico and Canada and entered as frozen product. Roughly one quarter of all imports were fresh cauliflower.

Sources

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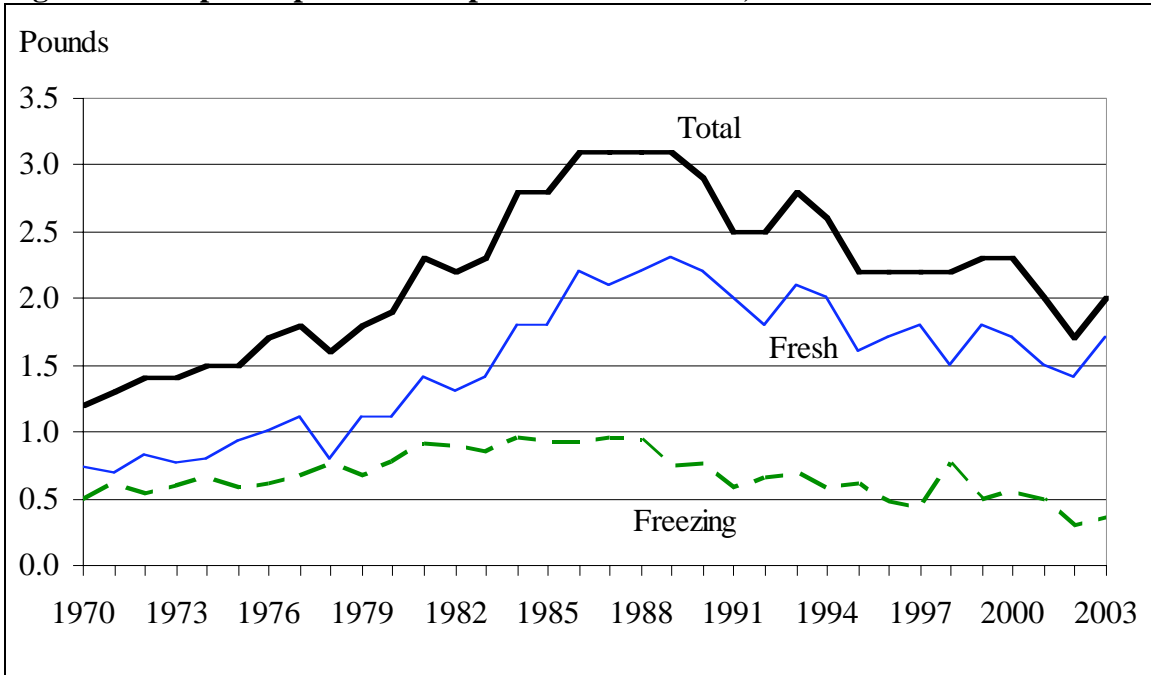
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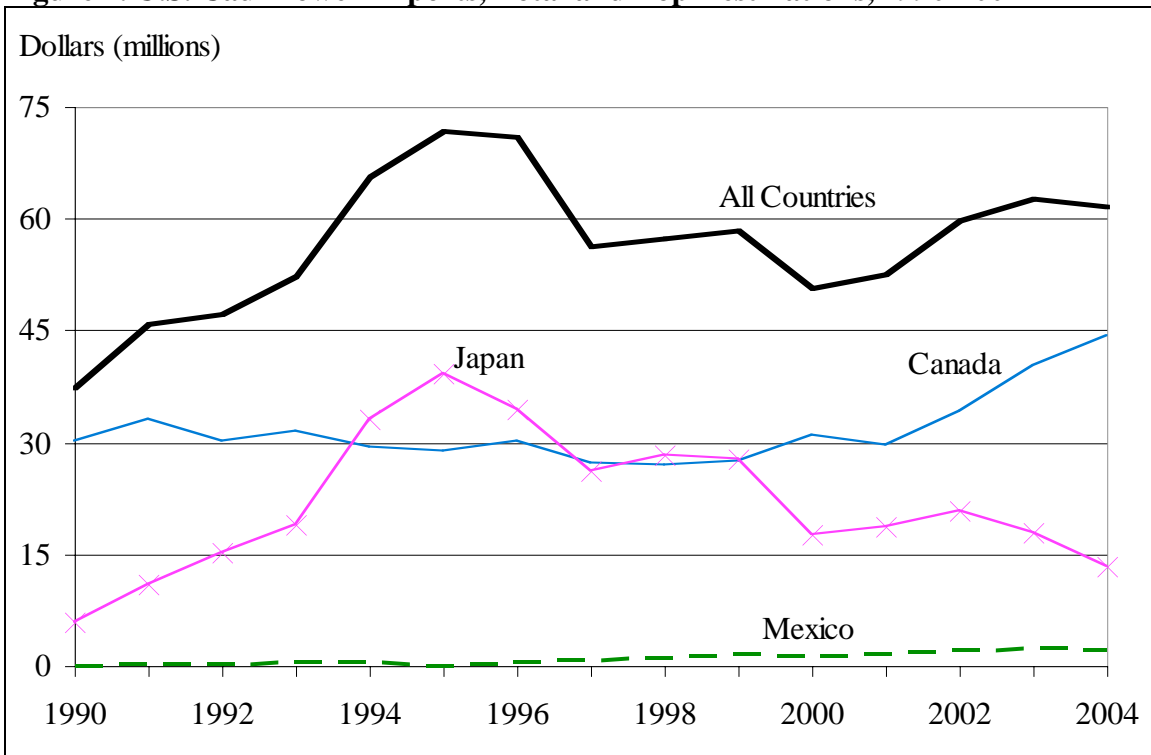
FIGURES

Figure 1. U.S. per Capita Consumption of Cauliflower, 1970-2003



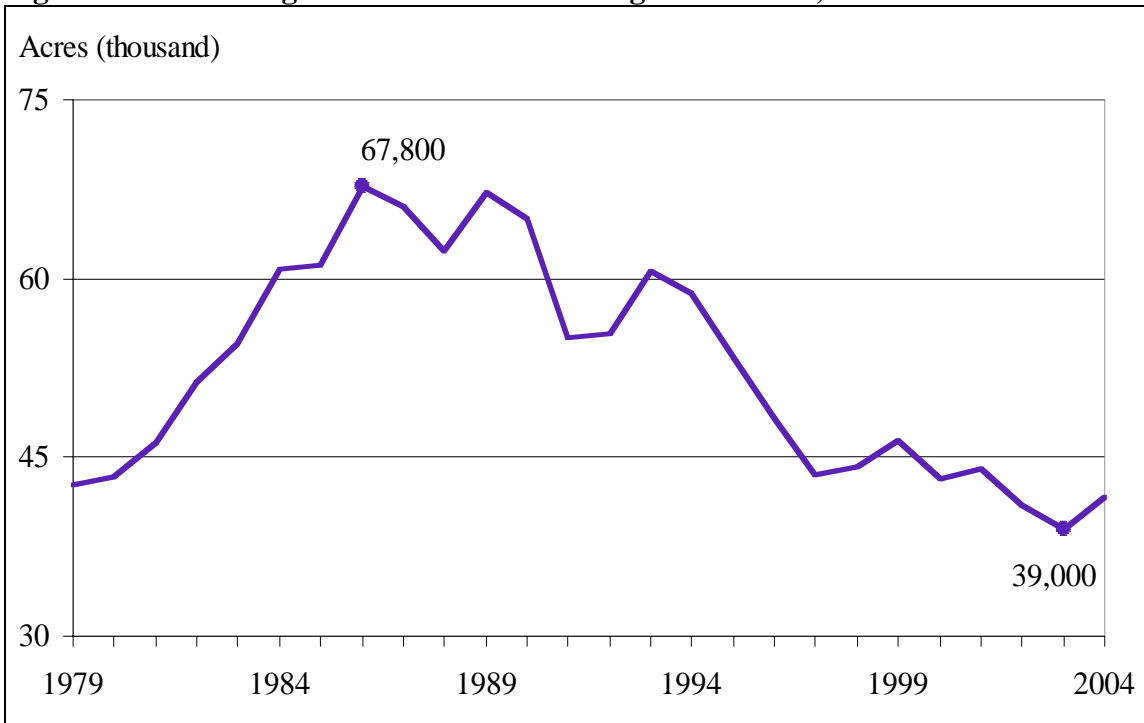
Source: USDA Economic Research Service, Per Capita Data System

Figure 2. U.S. Cauliflower Exports, Total and Top Destinations, 1990-2004



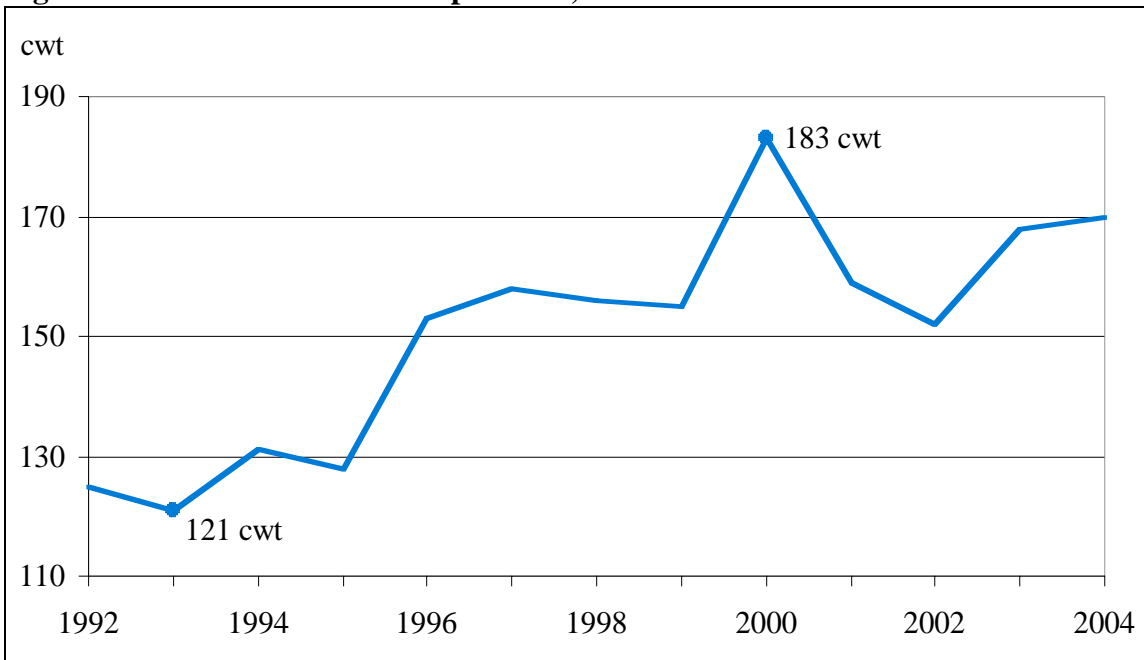
Source: USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

Figure 3. U.S. Acreage of Fresh and Processing Cauliflower, 1979-2004



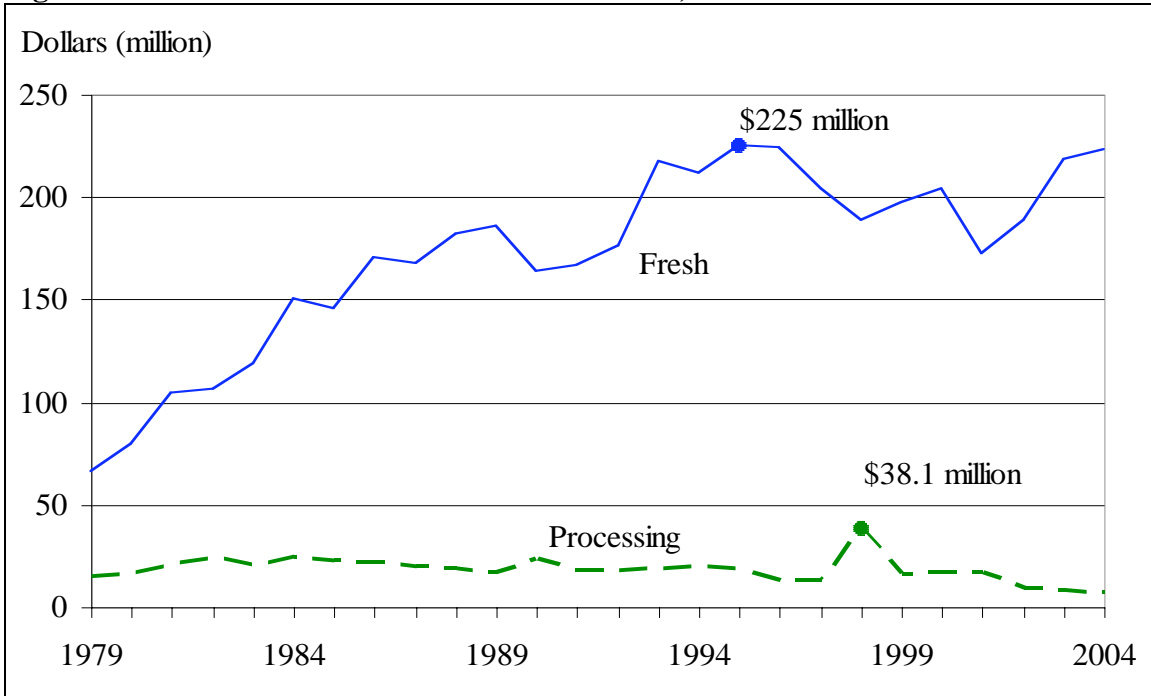
Source: USDA Economic Research Service Vegetables and Melons Yearbook

Figure 4. U.S. Cauliflower Yield per Acre, 1992-2004



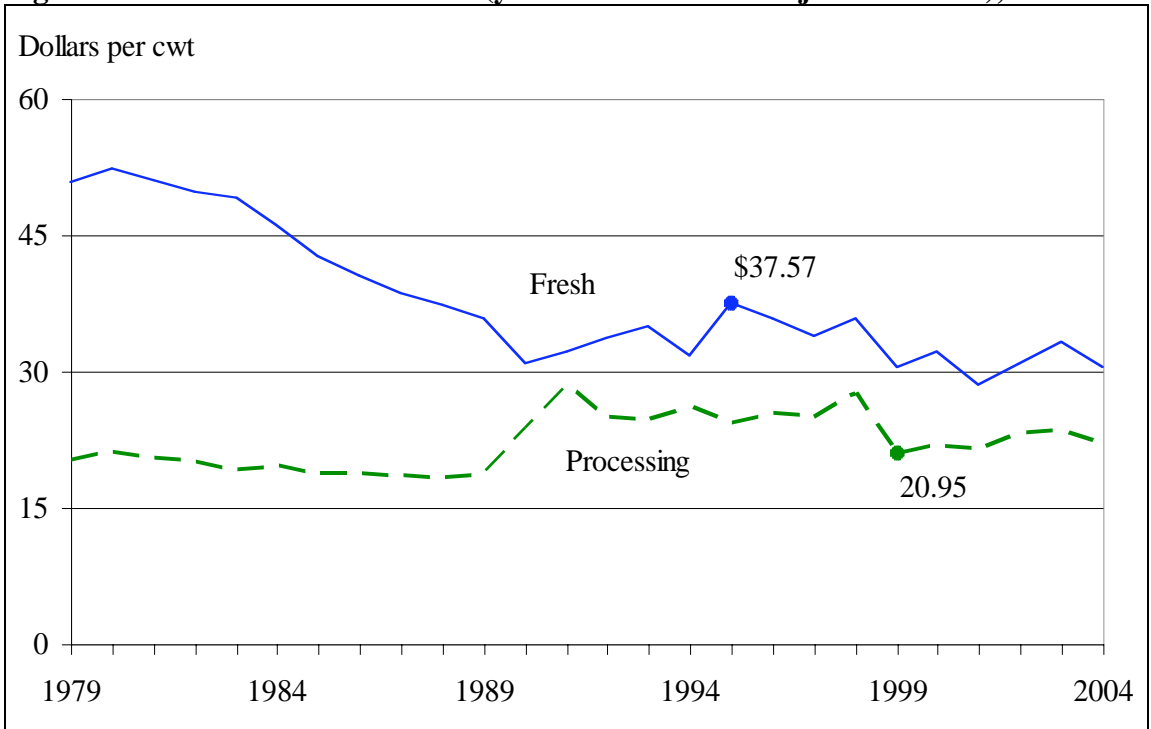
Source: USDA Economic Research Service Vegetables and Melons Yearbook

Figure 5. Value of Production of U.S. Cauliflower, 1979-2004



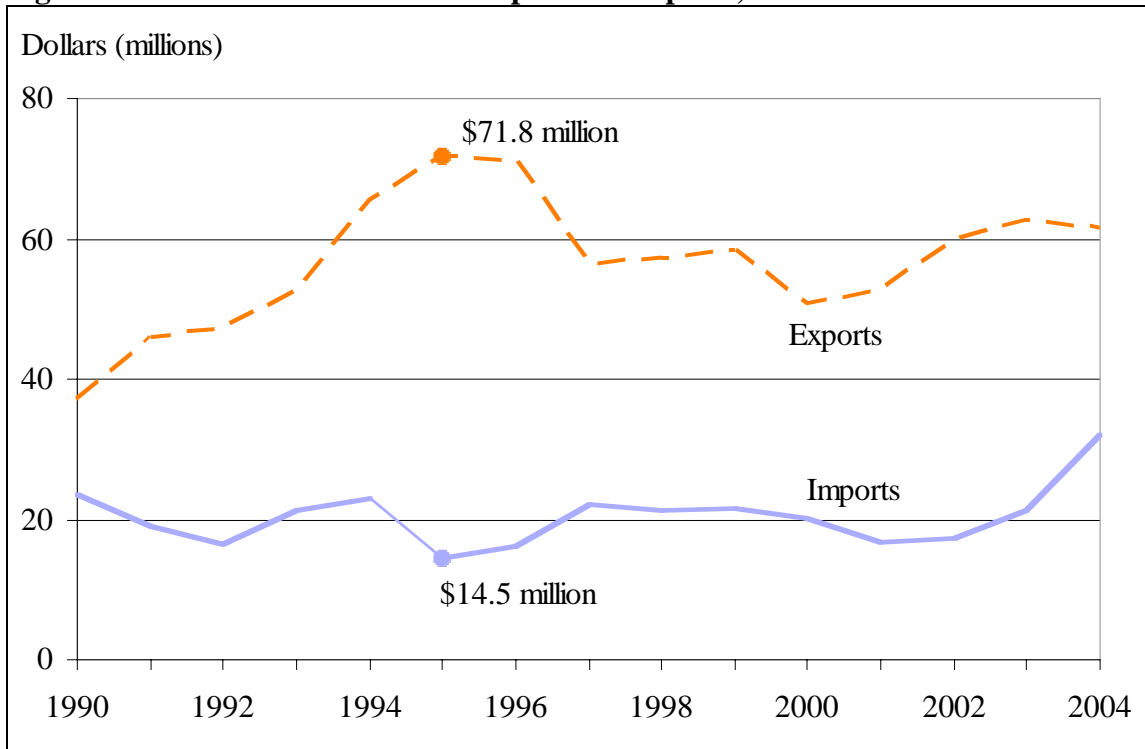
Source: USDA Economic Research Service Vegetables and Melons Yearbook

Figure 6. U.S. Price of Cauliflower (year-2000-inflation-adjusted dollars), 1979-2004



Source: USDA Economic Research Service Vegetables and Melons Yearbook

Figure 7. U.S. Cauliflower Trade: Exports vs Imports, 1990-2004



Source: USDA Foreign Agricultural Service