

FACT SHEET:

USDA's Export Sales Reporting Program: Provides Markets with an Early Alert

USDA's Export Sales Reporting Program monitors U.S. agricultural export sales on a daily and weekly basis.

Export sales reporting provides a constant stream of up-to-date market information for 40 U.S. agricultural commodities sold abroad. A single statistic reveals the significance of the program: in a typical year, the program monitors more than 40 percent of total U.S. agricultural exports.

The program also serves as an early alert on the possible impact foreign sales have on U.S. supplies and prices. The weekly U.S. Export Sales report is the most current available source of U.S. export sales data. The data is used to analyze the overall level of export demand, determine where markets exist, and assess the relative position of U.S. commodities in foreign markets.

Why the Program was Created

The Export Sales Reporting Program has its roots from the unexpected purchase of large amounts of grain by the Soviet Union in 1972, "The Great Russian Grain Robbery". The huge, unanticipated purchases of U.S. wheat and corn that year depleted U.S. reserve stocks which caused a sizable run-up in U.S. food prices.

Furthermore, there was growing concern that some companies might have an unfair advantage in situations like this because they had access to market-sensitive information that was unavailable to the public. To ensure that all parties involved in the production and export of U.S. grain had access to up-to-date export information, Congress mandated the Export Sales Reporting program in 1973.

Before the program was established, it was difficult for the public to obtain information on exports until the products were actually shipped. The program helps facilitate price stability by guaranteeing that everyone has access to the same information at the same time.

How the Program Works

The program requires both daily and weekly reporting of export sales. Weekly reporting is required for certain reportable commodities including: feed grains, wheat, wheat products, rye, flaxseed, linseed oil, cotton, cottonseed, oilseeds and products, rice, cattle hides and skins, beef and pork.

U.S. exporters are also required to report all large sales activity made in a single day to a single country for certain commodities by 3:00 p.m. Eastern time on the business day after a sale is made.

Large export sales of certain commodities are defined as 100,000 metric tons (20,000 tons for soybean oil) or more of one commodity in one day to a single destination, or cumulative sales of 200,000 tons (40,000 tons for soybean oil) or more of one commodity during the weekly reporting period to a single destination.

The commodities covered by the Export Sales Reporting Program have been selected for monitoring by Congressional action or through consultations between USDA and organizations that represent commodity producers and traders. The Secretary of Agriculture has the authority to add any commodity that the Secretary wishes to the list of commodities that are monitored.

U.S. exporters provide information on the quantity of their sales transactions, the type and class of commodity, the marketing year of the shipment and the ultimate destination. They also report any changes to previously reported information, such as cancellations or changes in destinations.

About 370 exporters report on a weekly basis via online, fax and e-mail, with approximately 1,300 data entries each week. All data remains confidential, as required by law, and is released only in aggregate form.

Checks and Balances

Several measures ensure the accuracy of the information. FAS has memorandum of understandings with USDA's Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration, as well as with the Bureau of the Census to share data and resolve discrepancies that exist.

Staff members meet periodically with exporters to verify and reinforce sound reporting practices. As an additional check, exporters must submit quarterly contract information reports that help to confirm reported activities.

Contact Information

For more information on the Export Sales Reporting Program, please contact the Export Sales Reporting staff at:

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Accessing the Information

Daily Sales: Daily sales are required to be reported to USDA by 3:00 p.m. on the day after the sales are made, and are then summarized and released to the public at 9:00 a.m. on the next business day. Daily sales news releases are available on the FAS web site at: <http://www.fas.usda.gov/programs/export-sales-reporting-program>

Weekly Report: The weekly report of export sales activity, "U.S. Export Sales", is published every Thursday at 8:30 a.m. eastern time. The export sales report is available on the FAS Web site at: www.fas.usda.gov/export-sales/esrd1.asp.

The "U.S. Export Sales" report is also available in paper copy via annual subscription from the National Technical Information Service: Tel.: 1-800-553-NTIS or customerservice@ntis.gov

Historical Data: Detailed historical data is available through the Export Sales Query System at: <http://apps.fas.usda.gov/esrquery/>