Foreign Agricultural Service
GAIN Report
Global Agriculture Information Network

Voluntary Report - public distribution

Date: 10/29/1999

GAIN Report #CH9650

China, Peoples Republic of

Market Promotion/ Competition

Guangzhou Trade Fair

1999

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Report Highlights:
The Chinese food and agriculture products on display at this Autumn's Guangzhou Trade Fair differ little from those displayed in years past. A preponderance of the Chinese food and agriculture products on display were fresh and dried products.

Includes PSD changes: No
Includes Trade Matrix: No
Unscheduled Report
Guangzhou [CH3], CH

The Chinese food and agriculture products on display at this Autumn's Guangzhou Trade Fair differ little from those displayed in years past. A preponderance of the Chinese food and agriculture products on display were fresh and dried products. A few processed products were on display, but mainly canned goods. The trade fair is one of the few events in China that allows visitors to see food and agriculture products from all over the country. Displayed products include those that are in direct competition with U.S. products in third countries (i.e. peanuts) and even some that are in competition with American producers in the U.S. (i.e. fresh garlic).

Specific agricultural and food products are on display included dried or dehydrated vegetables, seafood, mushroom, different varieties of peas and beans and peanuts, cloves of fresh garlic and packages of condiments. An estimated one-third of all exhibitors in the food and agriculture section were peddling garlic. Chinese wine from different provinces and of varying potency, canned fish and pork of familiar brands, snack foods and candies were available for order and onsite tasting. Posters of frozen and chilled products such as pork, poultry, and aquatic products advertize their availability even though the products were not present onsite.

While garlic were plentiful and prominently displayed at many booths, many other products in competition with American products in the U.S. market were not plainly visible or as widely advertised. Walnuts, apple juice concentrate, and honey each only had one exhibitor displaying samples and/or advertising their availability. For example, a Jiangxi Company had an attractive display of bottled honey, but the product is primarily for domestic consumption.

The practice of food and wine taste testing for visitors has become more popular. Unlike in many trade fairs in the past, a greater number of exhibitors harangued visitors to try their products and the number of products available for testing is more varied. Earlier, taste testing was usually confined to dried products, but this year various canned goods and beverages were set out for trying. However, not all of the exhibitors were engaging in this practice and some spent most of their time engrossed with reading the daily newspaper.

Among the unusual exhibits at the fair were pet products (Jiangxi Province), fruit flavored sausage snack sticks (Zhejiang Province), organic foods (Tianjin), hops (Xinjiang Province), and pre-cooked, vacuum packed sweet corn ears and sections (Qingdao, Shandong Province). In addition, the Shanghai Cereals, Oil and Foodstuff Import/Export Company (COFCO) displays packaged snacks made from U.S. almonds and dried peas.

In regards to provincial representation at the Fair, Shandong Province is most prominent. It eclipses Guangdong Province in presence and variety of products. The representation of Guangdong Province is fragmented by local interests.

The Fair announces that its exhibition next year will be shortened by three days each session. The Spring Session is scheduled for April 15-26, 2000, and the Autumn Session is scheduled for October 15-26, 2000. Despite reports on its successes this session and the full occupancy of major hotels in Guangzhou in the opening days of the show, the Canton Trade Fair has probably outlived its usefulness. Greater freedom on the part of Chinese companies to engage in trade deals without the assistance of domestic trading companies and greater availability of Chinese producer information for overseas buyers has started to make this multi-product fair obsolete. However, the fair remains as a excellent source of information regarding China competitive position with food and agricultural products.