

**Voluntary Report** – Voluntary - Public Distribution

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**Report Name:** Direct Versus Indirect Trade - Bulgaria's Market for US  
Agricultural Exports

**Country:** Bulgaria

**Post:** Sofia

**Report Category:** Agricultural Situation, Fishery Products, Oilseeds and Products, Tree Nuts, Export  
Accomplishments - Other, Beverages

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**Report Highlights:**

In 2024, Bulgarian imports from the United States were nearly \$100 million, slightly lower than in 2023, but still up over 50 percent since 2019. Imports of U.S. products were driven by several product groups such as U.S. beef, tree and ground nuts, food preparations, whiskies, essential oils, and rubber. The U.S. Census Bureau's (USCB) export data tracks U.S. food and agricultural trade shipped directly to Bulgaria. However, it does not measure the substantial level of U.S. agricultural trade to Bulgaria routed through other European ports of entry, mainly in Western Europe. According to U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. suppliers exported \$32.6 million of U.S. food, beverages and agricultural products to Bulgaria in 2024, at the same level as in 2023. However, when including indirect shipments, the total number rises to \$99 million.

## Overview

The United States is a substantial supplier of food, drinks, and agricultural products to Bulgaria. U.S. goods flow into Bulgaria either directly from the United States (mainly bulk and intermediate products) or are transshipped through the other western European Union (EU) ports of entry in the Netherlands, Germany, or Greece. Because the U.S. Census Bureau's export data only reflects direct U.S. trade with Bulgaria, it does not include significant volumes of U.S. products routed through distributors in Western European port cities. As a result, Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS)/Sofia views Bulgaria's National Institute of Statistics (NSI/Intrastat) data, which includes both direct and indirect trade, as a more accurate reflection of Bulgarian demand for U.S. food and agricultural products. Data about indirect trade (NSI/Intrastat) is provided by NSI upon a request by FAS/Sofia and is available only on an annual basis. FAS/Sofia encourages USDA cooperators and other U.S. food and agricultural exporters and stakeholders to look beyond USCB data and review different data sources when considering resource allocation and market development strategies for Bulgaria.

According to NSI/Intrastat data, Bulgarian importers sourced \$99 million worth of U.S. food, beverages, and agricultural products in 2024, 2.5 percent less than in 2023. The small decline occurred after many years of consistent growth and follows a 10 percent increase in 2023 over 2022. The leading categories of U.S. agricultural imports to Bulgaria in 2024 (Table 1) included distilled spirits, essential oils, tree nuts, and other products. This data includes both direct and indirect trade with U.S. origin agricultural and related products.

**Table 1. Leading categories in U.S. agricultural, food and related products imports to Bulgaria in 2024**

<b>Agricultural and Related Products</b>	<b>Value in \$ million</b>
Distilled spirits	18.9
Miscellaneous edible and food preparations	17.1
Essential oils	17.0
Almonds	10.2
Rubber	6.5
Pistachios	6.3
Beef	3.5
Peanuts	3.4
Wood	1.6
Non-alcoholic beverages	1.5
Albuminoidal substances	1.4
Sunflower seeds	1.3
Preparations of vegetable, fruits and nuts	1.2
Animal feed	1.2
Cocoa preparations	1.1

Source: Bulgarian National Statistical Institute (NSI/Intrastat)

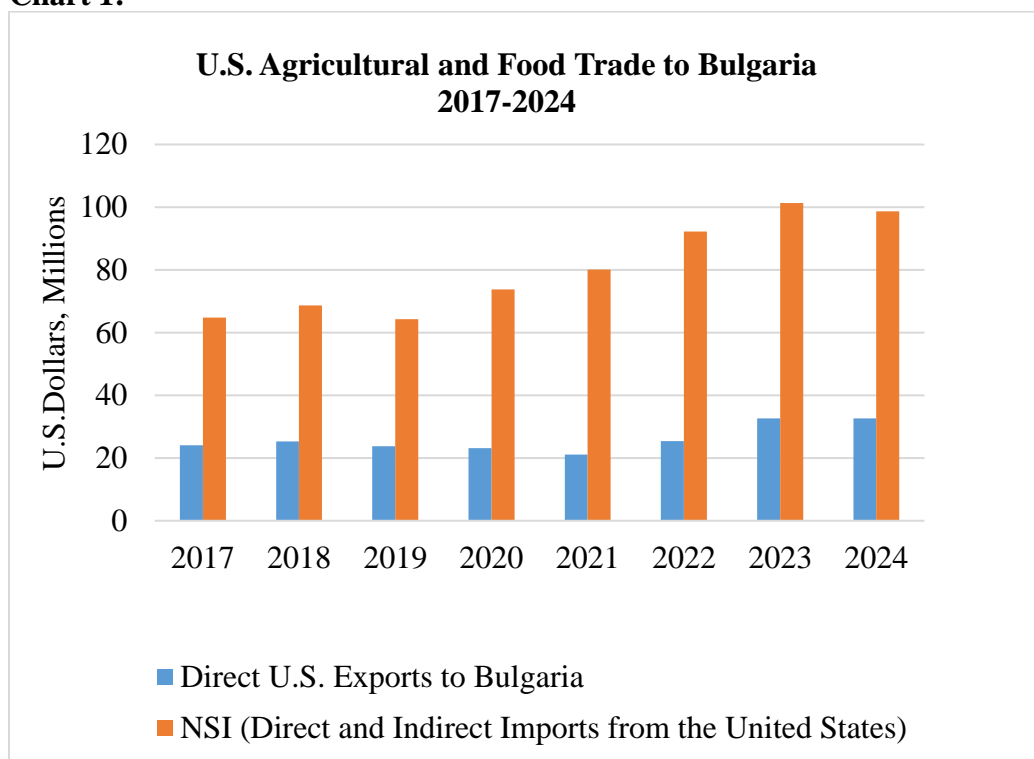
**Table 2. U.S. Food and Agricultural Trade to Bulgaria 2019-2024 (\$ million)**

Source of Data	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Direct U.S. exports to Bulgaria	23.8	23.2	21.2	25.4	32.6	32.6
NSI* (Direct and Indirect imports from the United States)	64.3	73.8	80.1	92.2	101.3	98.7
Difference (Indirect exports)	40.5	50.6	58.9	66.8	68.7	66.1
Percentage of indirect exports	63.0	68.6	73.6	72.4	67.8	67.0

Data on direct exports is U.S. Census data (USCB)

\*Data on direct and indirect imports provided by the Bulgarian National Statistical Institute (Intrastat)

**Chart 1:**



\*Data on direct and indirect imports provided by the Bulgarian National Statistical Institute (Intrastat)

### U.S. Food and Agricultural Trade to Bulgaria by Category

Direct U.S. agricultural trade to Bulgaria generally consists of bulk commodities shipped as sea freight, including wood, soybean meal, corn, ground nuts (peanuts) and tree nuts (almonds). The trade data for these categories is usually captured by both U.S. Census export data and NSI/Intrastat data. For example, U.S. exports of almonds and peanuts to Bulgaria in 2024 were mainly direct trade and were correctly reflected by both sets of data. Despite the growth in 2024, however, direct trade continued to be impacted by supply chain challenges and consumer income. Although incomes increased, they still lagged prices, which affected importers' ability to import larger shipments. The overall situation, however, improved considerably compared to 2023.

Indirect trade tends to be products that are shipped in smaller quantities, of higher value, and/or new to market, and are usually destined for direct consumption. These products may require more flexible terms

of trade than U.S. suppliers are able to provide. In other cases, Western European distributors can offer U.S. shippers sales volumes and/or payment terms that would be difficult for Bulgarian importers to match. Many U.S. exporters also find it more efficient to ship large volumes to well-established distribution hubs in Western Europe and rely on those channels to supply other EU markets. Despite considerable improvement in the supply chain issues in 2024 compared to 2023, the shipping time from the United States to Bulgaria was still a challenge, especially in the first half of the year, and made sourcing U.S. products from Western Europe, especially more expensive and higher-end categories, much more efficient for local importers and distributors.

Some Bulgarian importers prefer to work through European distributors and find it convenient for intermediaries to handle EU customs clearance for U.S. products. The same applies for U.S. products that are subject to Tariff Rate Quotas (TRQs) for imports in the EU, where licensing for imports is subject to history of experience. For new-to-market products, most Bulgarian importers prefer to purchase smaller volumes to test consumer demand and to build distribution channels. Finally, European distributors may incentivize Bulgarian importers with favorable terms of payments or advertising, particularly if there are longstanding commercial relationships. Many local importers preferred to avoid direct imports due to the usual requirement of U.S. exporters for advance payments.

In 2024, indirect trade declined slightly for the first time in the last eight years to \$66.1 million but was still double the amount of direct trade (by 103 percent). The share of indirect trade to total continued to decrease to 67 percent compared to 2023 (69 percent) and 2022 (72 percent).

**Table 3. 2024 Direct and Indirect U.S. Food and Agricultural Trade to Bulgaria (\$)**

HS Code	Description	NSI* (Direct and Indirect imports from the United States) in USD	Direct U.S. Trade to Bulgaria) in USD	Difference (Indirect U.S. Trade to Bulgaria) in USD	% of Difference Between Databases (Transshipments)
<b>Agricultural and Related Products</b>		<b>98,733,840</b>	<b>32,572,000</b>	<b>66,161,840</b>	<b>67.0</b>
0201 and 0202	Beef and beef products	3,532,225	0	3,532,225	100
03	Fishery Products	570,918	198,645	372,273	65.2
05	Products of animal origin (bovine genetics and other)	417,851	381,256	36,595	8.7
07	Edible vegetables and certain roots and tubers	316,180	0	316,180	100
08	Edible fruits and nuts	18,403,479	14,988,495	3,414,984	18.6
-080212	Fresh or dried almonds, shelled	10,281,933	9,428,383	853,550	8.3
-080231	Walnuts, fresh or dried, in shell	132,276	132,276	0	0
-080232	Walnuts, fresh and dried, shelled	289,617	163,714	125,903	43.5

-080251	Fresh or dried pistachios, in shell	6,315,594	4,768,304	1,547,290	24.4
-080252	Fresh or dried pistachios, shelled	565,710	0	565,710	100
-08029910	Fresh or dried pecans	687,494	396,398	291,096	42.3
09	Coffee, tea, mate, and spices	53,302	11,485	41,817	78.4
1005	Corn	389,882	306,368	83,514	2.1
1007	Sorghum	50,422	0	50,422	100
110630	Flour and meal from products from Chapter 8	116,062	28,532	87,530	75
12	Oilseeds and Oleaginous fruits	5,389,461	4,541,205	848,256	15.7
-1202	Peanuts, not roasted or cooked	3,386,857	3,222,181	164,676	4.9
-120600	Sunflower seeds	1,308,405	1,294,091	14,314	1.0
-1208	Flours and Meals from Oilseeds	410,700	0	410,700	100
-1209	Clover and Vegetable Planting Seeds	208,578	1,097	207,481	99.5
13	Lac, gums, raisins and other vegetable saps and extracts	140,361	125,275	15,086	10.7
16	Preparations of meat or fish, of crustaceans, mollusks or of insects	52,825	5,301	47,524	89.9
17	Sugar and sugar confectionary	352,706	31,004	321,702	91.2
18	Cocoa and Cocoa Preparations	1,125,431	543,530	581,901	51.7
19	Preparations of cereals	158,862	28,959	129,903	81.7
20	Preparations of vegetables, fruit, nuts or other parts of plants	1,152,673	2,724	1,149,849	99.8
-2008	Fruits and nuts, prepared or preserved	1,065,805	1,931	1,063,874	99.8
21	Miscellaneous edible food preparations	17,068,067	12,942,981	4,125,086	24.2
-2103	Sauce and Condiments	126,364	109,144	17,220	13.6
-2106	Food Preparations	16,788,581	12,713,079	4,075,502	24.3
22	Beverages, spirits and vinegar	20,631,760	9,512,168	11,119,592	53.4
-2202	Non-alcoholic beverages, waters	1,532,994	517,012	1,015,982	66.3

-2204	Wine	190,344	141,617	48,727	25.6
-2208	Undenatured ethyl alcohol and spirits	18,912,254	8,848,395	10,063,859	53.2
-220830	Whiskies	16,368,659	8,848,345	7,520,314	45.9
-220840	Rum	64,226	0	64,226	100
-220860	Vodka	2,342,356	10	2,342,346	100
-220870	Liquors and Cordials	64,765	0	64,765	100
23	Residues from the Food Industry	1,222,566	387,162	835,404	68.3
-2304	Oilcakes from soybeans, in pellets	306,740	161	306,579	99.9
-2309	Preparations for Animal Feed (pet food)	700,687	171,862	528,825	75.5
33	Essential Oils	17,039,817	5,128,543	11,911,274	69.9
35	Albuminoidal substances, modified starches, enzymes	1,395,593	656,817	738,776	52.9
40	Rubber	6,469,220	1,360,720	5,108,500	78.9
42	Articles of leather	381,388	235,858	145,530	38.2
44	Wood	1,631,255	1,289,288	341,967	20.9
51	Wool	531,848	530,499	1,399	0.3

*\*Data on direct and indirect imports provided by the Bulgarian National Statistical Institute (Intrastat)*

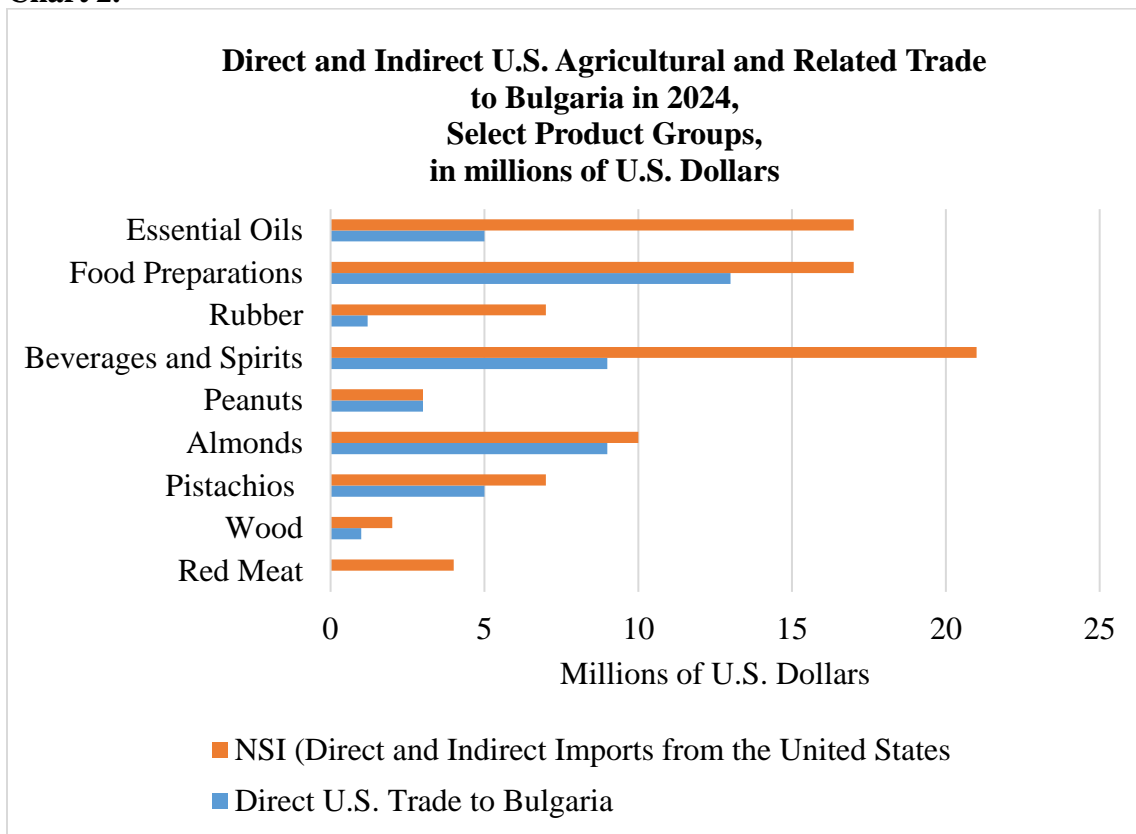
### **Imports of U.S. Products with Fastest Growth in 2024**

Bulgaria is a growing consumer of fish and seafood products, especially due to an expanding tourist industry. Due to insufficient domestic production, fish and seafood demand is largely covered by imports. For 2024, NSI reports that the Bulgarian imports of U.S. fish and seafood increased by 172 percent compared to 2023 to \$571,000. Indirect trade prevailed with 65 percent share. Traders report that Canada is a strong competitor for many U.S. fishery and seafood products due to preferential trade regime (import duties) with the EU compared to the United States.

Edible fruits and nuts (HS Code 08) are a significant trade category (which includes almonds, pistachios, walnuts and pecans) where imports grew by 31 percent in 2024 compared with 2023 to a new record of \$18.4 million. The share of indirect trade decreased from 36 percent in 2023 to 19 percent in 2024. Countries for transshipments were Greece (8 percent), Germany (4 percent) and the Netherlands (2 percent).

Imports of U.S. almonds (shelled) grew by an impressive 43 percent in 2024 over 2023 following years of consistent increases. The share of indirect trade to Bulgaria in 2024 was small at only about eight percent due to a well-established market, stable demand, and well positioned and experienced market players.

**Chart 2.**



*\*Data on direct and indirect imports provided by the Bulgarian National Statistical Institute (Intrastat)*

Imports of U.S. pistachios to the market continued to grow in 2024 with 24 percent over 2023. Trade with U.S. in-shell pistachios grew by 23 percent to \$6.3 million, with indirect trade accounting for over 24 percent, and shipped through Greece, Germany, and Turkey. Trade for shelled pistachios also increased by 39 percent to over \$560,000, all indirect, mainly via Germany and the Netherlands. U.S. walnuts in shell (\$130,000) entered the market only directly while shelled walnuts (\$290,000) were shipped via Turkey and Canada with indirect shipments accounting for 43 percent of trade. Imports of pecans exploded in 2024 from only \$21,000 in 2023 to about \$690,000 in 2024. Indirect trade accounted for over 42 percent coming mainly from the Netherlands.

Imports of U.S. peanuts (HS Code 12) have been consistently growing in recent years. In 2024 NSI data shows that these imports reached a new record of \$3.4 million, growing by 11 percent from 2023. The market enjoyed stable demand and indirect trade accounted for less than five percent, mainly via Belgium and the Netherlands. This allows the importers to close bigger import deals and carry larger volumes due to the reduced risk for sales.

In the case of essential oils (HS code 33), U.S. exports to Bulgaria are traditionally high. NSI reflects total Bulgarian imports from the U.S. at \$17.0 million in 2024, 25 percent higher than in 2023. The indirect trade accounted for 70 percent. Most U.S. essential oils enter Bulgarian via Romania (22 percent), the Netherlands (6 percent), and Spain (4 percent).

Total Bulgarian imports of U.S. distilled spirits (HS Code 2208) continued to grow and reached a new record of \$18.9 million in 2024, or 15 percent more than in 2023. (Tables 3 and 4). Imports of whiskies continue to grow by about eight percent in 2024 compared to 2023 to \$16.4 million, with about half coming indirectly. Most transshipped U.S. distilled spirits come to Bulgaria through Spain (27 percent), Germany (10 percent), and the Netherlands (5 percent). NSI data also shows over \$1.4 million of imports of U.S. rum, vodka, liqueurs, and cordials in 2024, all of which arrived indirectly. See Table 4 below for the primary categories of U.S. distilled spirits traded to Bulgaria.

**Table 4. U.S. Undenatured Ethyl Alcohol, Spirits, Liqueurs to Bulgaria 2020-2024 (\$)**

HS Code	Description		2020 (\$)	2021(\$)	2022(\$)	2023 (\$)	2024 (\$)
220830	Whiskies	U.S. Export	3,180,732	3,224,583	4,557,480	7,277,885	7,934,000
		NSI	7,418,571	8,729,594	10,528,294	15,180,592	16,368,659
220840	Rum and other spirits	U.S. Export	0	0	0	0	0
		NSI	599,921	757,375	663,223	785,723	64,226
220850	Gin and Geneva	U.S. Export	0	0	0	0	0
		NSI	1,251	107,497	619	710	4,335
220860	Vodka	U.S. Export	0	0	0	0	0
		NSI	1,622,836	8,167	85,888	394,686	2,342,356
220870	Liqueurs and cordials	U.S. Export	0	8,256	0	0	0
		NSI	160,104	130,029	117,271	83,587	64,765
220890	Ethyl alcohol of an alcoholic strength of < 80% vol.	U.S. Export	7,283	7,821	0	0	0
		NSI	52,420	32,848	91,514	50,602	67,913
		<b>U.S. Export</b>	<b>3,188,015</b>	<b>3,240,660</b>	<b>4,557,480</b>	<b>7,277,885</b>	<b>7,934,000</b>
		<b>NSI</b>	<b>9,855,103</b>	<b>9,765,510</b>	<b>11,487,409</b>	<b>16,495,945</b>	<b>18,912,254</b>

Data on direct exports is U.S. Census data (USCB).

\*Data on direct and indirect imports provided by the Bulgarian National Statistical Institute (Intrastat)

### FAS/Sofia's Marketing Support for U.S. Agricultural and Food Exports

One of FAS/Sofia's core missions is to continuously support the promotion and expansion of U.S. agricultural products in Bulgaria. FAS/Sofia carefully monitors and analyzes the transshipment data to identify products with best prospects and tailors its marketing activities and efforts to support their



growth on the Bulgarian market. These activities may vary from promotions targeting specific or broader groups such as importers, distributors, retailers, food service specialists, opinion leaders, and end consumers, to participation in leading domestic trade shows, attendance, and recruitment of buyers at international trade shows, commodity-specific buyer missions in the United States, and others.

**Attachments:**

No Attachments.