

Required Report: Required - Public Distribution

Date: July 02, 2024

Report Number: PK2024-0008

Report Name: Exporter Guide Annual

Country: Pakistan

Post: Islamabad

Report Category: Exporter Guide

Prepared By: Rashid Raja

Approved By: Christopher Rittgers

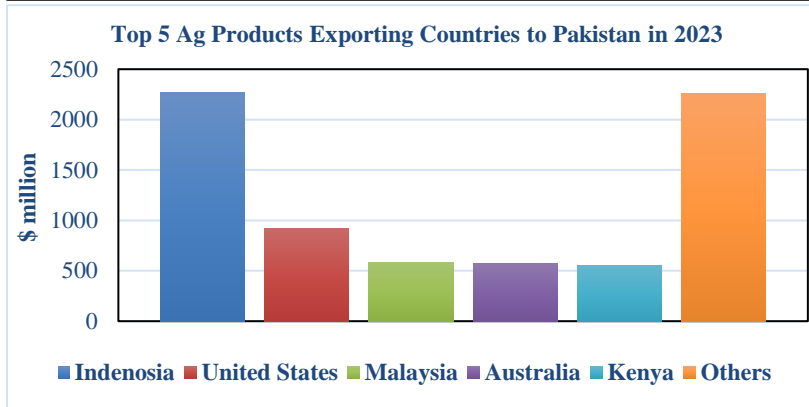
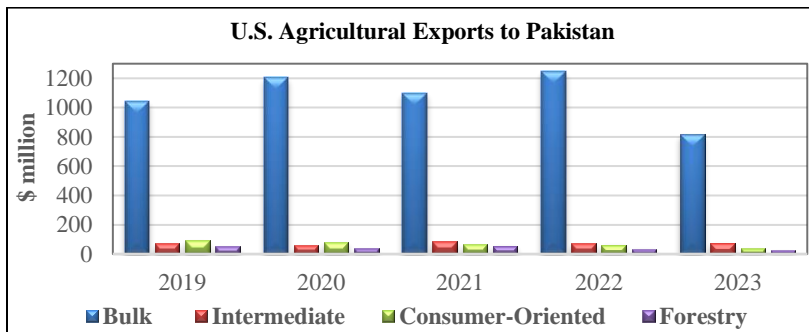
Report Highlights:

Pakistan is the 28th largest export market for U.S. food and agricultural-related products, with U.S. exports surpassing \$930 million in 2023. The top U.S. exports to Pakistan were cotton, planting seeds, tree nuts, dairy products, pulses, and forestry products. Pakistan is a growing consumer market due to its rapid urbanization and young population. Consumers are shifting away from bulk and raw foods to packaged and processed foods, including ready-to-eat meals, and frozen foods. E-commerce is also gaining popularity in urban Pakistan. This Exporter Guide provides an overview of the market, trends, and recommendations to U.S. exporters on how to conduct business in Pakistan.

MARKET FACT SHEET: PAKISTAN

Executive Summary: Pakistan is the fifth most populous nation in the world with a population of 241.5 million and nearly 60 percent population is below 35. The increasing proportion of Pakistan’s youth provides an increased awareness of healthy eating.

Pakistan Agricultural Trade with the United States: Pakistan was the 28th largest export market for U.S. food and agricultural products in 2023. The value of agricultural trade between the United States and Pakistan in 2023 totaled \$1.13 billion. U.S. agricultural exports to Pakistan reached \$930 million, led by cotton (\$809 million), pulses (\$8 million), planting seeds (\$53 million), consumer-oriented products (\$37 million), tree nuts (\$16 million), dairy products (\$16 million), breeding chicks (\$3 million), and wood products (\$35 million). Overall trade with the United States reached \$2.32 billion in first four months of 2024.



Food Processing: The food and beverage processing industry is the second-largest industry after textiles, accounting for 27 percent of the value-added production and 16 percent of employment in the manufacturing sector. This industry has huge potential for U.S. bulk and consumer-oriented product exports.

Food Retail: Pakistan’s modern food retail sector is growing and ranges from small family-owned stores to medium and large distribution centers. Affluent consumers are willing to pay a premium price for high-quality U.S. products.

Food Service: The industry is capitalizing on changing lifestyles, a growing young population, and an increase in the number of working women. U.S. fast-food restaurants dominate the franchise sector and are dependent on imported ingredients.

Quick Facts

Top U.S. Agricultural Exports to Pakistan

Cotton, Pulses, Forestry products, Tree nuts, Dairy products, and Planting seeds.

Top Food Retailers in Pakistan

Imtiaz, Alfatah, Naheed, Metro, Carrefour, Green Valley, Punjab, Madina etc.

Population/Economic Indicators

Population: 241.5 million (FY23)

GDP: \$393 billion (FY24)

Per Capita Income: \$1,680 (FY24)

Economic Growth Rate: 2.38% (FY24)

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good reputation of U.S. products U.S. products perceived as high quality and safe Wide range of food and beverage products 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Challenges for U.S. suppliers to meet buyers requirements for mixed shipments in small quantities Lack of awareness about the taste and benefits of U.S. products
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Growing potential for imported commodities like soybeans and wood products as they are unavailable domestically Young population is adopting new lifestyle and preferring quality over price 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Non-tariff barriers such as Urdu labeling and Halal certification The fluctuating value of Pakistani Rupee against the US Dollar High tariffs, prohibiting imports

Data Source:

Trade Data Monitor, State Bank of Pakistan, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, Economic Survey of Pakistan, and industry sources

Contact:

FAS Islamabad, Pakistan

AgIslamabad@usda.gov

SECTION 1: MARKET OVERVIEW

Economic Overview:

Pakistan is the fifth most populous nation in the world, with a population of 241.5 million and over 60 percent population below 35. The increasing proportion of Pakistan's youth has developed an increased awareness of healthy eating. During FY2024, Pakistan's economy registered moderate recovery reflected by GDP growth of 2.38 percent against the previous year's contraction of 0.21 percent. Agriculture emerged as a main driver of economic growth, registering a growth of 6.25 percent. This growth is mainly driven by 16.82 percent growth in important crops such as wheat, rice, and cotton. The textile industry remains Pakistan's most important manufacturing sector, with textile products accounting for more than 60 percent of total exports. The sector is a major buyer of U.S. cotton.

Despite challenges, Pakistan seems to be on the path of steady progress towards economic recovery and stabilization. Trade with the United States reaches \$2.32 billion through the first four months of 2024. There are over 25 U.S. firms involved in Pakistan's food and agriculture sector, primarily in the form of investments, franchising, and distributorship. Major U.S. agricultural science companies include Corteva, Cargill, and FMC. The Massey Ferguson Company assembles tractors and sells small-scale farm equipment. U.S.-based companies PepsiCo, Coca-Cola, and Mondelez have food processing operations. Valmont sells irrigation equipment, while U.S. genetics companies are tapping into the growing demand from the dairy sector. The U.S. arm of Louis Dreyfus maintains commodity trading operations. In addition, about 15 U.S. restaurant franchises are operating in Pakistan, helping to provide the impetus for the development of safe and modern food supply chains. Furthermore, Pakistan is now a growing importer of U.S. wood products due to growth in residential construction. U.S. companies have an advantage as U.S. products have a good reputation for high quality.

Food Purchasing Behavior:

A small number of international and domestic grocery retail outlets are changing the food retail sector in urban cities, but Pakistanis still buy much of their food in traditional shops and markets. In major cities, middle and high-income consumers are diversifying their purchases away from bulk and raw foods towards packaged and processed foods, including ready-to-eat meals and frozen foods. Supporting this trend is an increase in women working full-time and higher levels of disposable income, particularly in urban areas. Food consumption patterns have not changed in rural areas and are based on wheat and grain products and a variety of meat products.

A typical Pakistani household makes regular purchases of staple foods (e.g., wheat flour, pulses, edible oils, fruits, vegetables, milk, and meat) from neighborhood stores due to convenience, perceived freshness, and limited storage space at home. Young Pakistani professionals purchase food from modern retail stores due to the greater variety of products, and access to co-located stores, restaurants, and prepared foods. For urban dwellers with sufficient incomes, one-stop grocery shopping is catching on as a family outing. Affluent Pakistani families are attracted to modern retail stores due to affordability, strategic locations, variety, and access to imported processed foods. The demand for specialty and high-value foods such as dates, cereals, beverages, chocolates, almonds, cakes, fruits, and fruit juices soars during the Islamic holidays, especially Eid and Ramadan.

Consumer Demographic Trends and Labor Force:

Pakistan is the fifth most populous nation in the world with a population of 241.5 million in 2023, the tenth largest labor force, a population growth rate of 2.55 percent, and nearly 60 percent population is below 35. Pakistan’s middle class is estimated at over 60 million, but incomes deemed middle class are significantly lower than in the United States. Consumers from the Pakistani middle class broadly support both domestically produced and imported foods. The upper-middle-income class is estimated at 17 million, with relatively high per capita income that favors consumer spending.

Advantages and Challenges for U.S. Suppliers

Advantages	Challenges
Pakistan has a large young population that is more focused on consumer items.	Shipments from the United States take longer.
The expatriate community looks for specialty U.S. food products and dines in Western-style restaurants.	The inability of U.S. exporters to meet Pakistan’s Urdu labeling and Halal certification requirements.
Consumers are seeking quality products from both domestic and international suppliers.	Competition from other countries like the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and Europe.
The gradual transformation of modern retailing in urban centers.	Imported food products are generally subject to high tariffs. Most imported products face exorbitant regulatory duties ranging from 35 to 75 percent.
U.S. products are popular for quality, taste, and wholesomeness.	Proximity to other countries provides competitors with a comparative advantage.
Eating out culture is popular at upper- and middle-income levels.	U.S. suppliers are often unable to offer specialty products of smaller quantities required by the industry.
Urban population creates demand and welcomes new products as they are open to trying novel tastes.	Locally produced snack foods, salad dressings, sauces, jams, and other processed foods are relatively inexpensive.
European retailers market a wide range of imported products have a great influence on purchasing patterns.	Local importers prefer to initiate business deals with small orders.
Franchising has been introduced and the retail food sector is transitioning to a modern structure with a growing number of Western-style fast-food restaurant chains, bakeries, and coffee shops.	Market penetration for imported products is concentrated in major cities.

SECTION II: EXPORTER BUSINESS TIPS

General Consumer Tastes and Preferences:

Pakistani consumers prefer fresh foodstuffs that are readily available in their neighborhoods at affordable prices. Healthy eating is popular among educated consumers and is featured in newspapers, magazines, and television. Fresh foods, fruit juices, fruit concentrated-based beverages, organic foods,

sugar-free confectionery, packaged food with higher fiber content, dairy products, and vitamin and calcium-fortified packaged foods and beverages are popular among middle and upper-income consumers. Pakistan is 96 percent Muslim, leaving only four percent of the population to consume pork. Products with meat ingredients must be certified Halal to ensure that the meat is sourced from livestock slaughtered following the tenets of Islam. Food and ingredients destined for the food service sector must also be certified Halal where appropriate. The import and sale of alcohol are prohibited.

Traditional and modern snack foods, such as confectionaries, pastries, cakes, biscuits, ice cream, or sweet and savory snacks are very popular. Easy-to-prepare frozen foods and instant noodles are also popular. Local flavors are preferred and local food manufacturers are constantly developing new products using a combination of local and imported flavors. The rise of the urban middle class has increased the acceptance of packaged and ready-to-eat food products. Pakistanis are more willing to try new foods while eating out but tend to prefer traditional fare at home. Chinese, Italian, Thai, Moroccan, and Middle Eastern foods are among the fastest-growing new cuisines in Pakistan.

Finding a Business Partner:

The first market entry step is to locate a reliable importer and distributor. Professional distributors and brand managers are interested in expanding their product lines. These importers typically seek exclusive rights to market a particular product or brand. Exporters should meet potential importers and research their business profiles carefully through banks and trade associations.

Restaurant franchises are one way of introducing new products. An increasing number of restaurant chains are opening in Karachi and Lahore. These include quick service, casual dining, and cafés. While most of these companies' ingredients are produced in Pakistan, some require specialized ingredients or imports of certain items that are not readily available. Exporters should check with importers to see if they are approved suppliers for franchises. Additionally, the hotel sector features niche high-value food products not readily found in retail outlets. Fresh fruits and vegetables are readily available in Pakistan, but certain high-quality fruits and vegetables (e.g., cherries, plums, broccoli, and lettuce), meat cuts, and fish products (e.g., shrimp and crab) can be difficult to source locally.

General points to discuss with the importer include:

- Ensure the imports comply with regulations, and that the item(s) are not on the negative list.
- The terms and conditions of imports are specified in the letter of credit.
- Bulk vegetable oils are the only food products subject to random testing to ensure fitness for human consumption at the time of arrival.
- The importer should possess a compulsory letter of credit or register the contract with a bank to import goods into Pakistan.

Exporters should consider the following guidelines before selecting a distributor:

- Do they have a national or regional distribution network?
- How is their distribution network structured?
- Who are their customers? Do they sell to retailers, hotels, or restaurants?
- What are their capabilities? Do they have experience handling perishable or value-added foods?
- Are they interested in marketing your products? If so, how will marketing costs be handled?

- Are they paying listing fees to retailers?
- Are they managing similar brands or products from other suppliers?
- What are the margins and costs charged by the distributor?

Ensuring payment is a critical consideration when establishing a relationship with an importer. Until a working relationship is established, exporters may wish to consider requiring an irrevocable letter of credit. Some Pakistani importers are accustomed to operating without credit and may be willing to pay cash prior to shipment. While FAS Islamabad receives few inquiries concerning delinquent Pakistani importers, our office cannot mediate contractual disputes or serve as a collection agent when differences over payment arise.

Regional Trade Shows and Reverse Trade Missions:

U.S. companies should consider participation in regional trade shows ([Gulfood](#), [SIAL](#), [ANUGA](#), [FHA](#)) to reach potential Pakistani importers, traders, and distributors. For matchmaking and assistance in finding a potential partner, FAS Islamabad often organizes buyers for reverse trade missions to the United States. These trade missions are designed to educate Pakistani buyers about the market situation, product availability, and mechanics of trade with key companies in the United States.

SECTION III: IMPORT FOOD STANDARDS, REGULATIONS, AND IMPORT PROCEDURES

Pakistan imposes high import duties on most food products, hindering the growth of food imports. Import tariffs on consumer food products range from zero to 150 percent, but most products face exorbitant regulatory duties ranging from 35 to 75 percent. It should be noted that Pakistan has very few trade agreements, the exceptions being agreements with China, Malaysia, and Sri Lanka. Pakistan's Ministry of Commerce published a new [Import Policy Order](#) on April 22, 2022, which details the procedures and requirements to export food products to Pakistan.

General Import Procedures:

The clearing agent is required to furnish the following documents to the authorities for food and beverage products imported into Pakistan:

- Bill of lading
- Invoice
- Packing list
- Certificate of origin
- Health certificate
- Permits, wherever applicable (animal and plant quarantine)
- Sanitary certificate

Pakistan's Halal Certification and Urdu Labeling Requirements:

Requirements for all imported consumer-packaged food and beverage products include:

- The shipment shall be accompanied by a Halal certificate issued by a Halal certification body, accreditation with an accrediting body that is a member of either the Standard Metrology Institute for Islamic Countries (SMIIC) or the International Halal Accreditation Forum (IHAF).
- The logo of the Halal certification body shall be printed on the consumer packaging.
- All consumer food and beverage imports must have 50% of the shelf life remaining, from the date of filing the Import General Manifest (IGM), and 66% of the shelf life remaining from the date of manufacturing.
- Labeling of nutritional values and usage instructions must be in Urdu and English language.
- The labeling shall not be in the form of stickers, overprinting, or stamps.
- Urdu labeling is not required for bulk packaging meant for industrial consumers. However, a Halal certificate is required for all food products regardless of the size and type of the packaging.

U.S. manufacturers and exporters are encouraged to work closely with their importers to ensure that their labels meet Pakistan's requirements at the time of import. Other import restrictions include a ban on selling alcohol and U.S. beef.

SECTION IV: MARKET SECTOR STRUCTURE AND TRENDS

Retail Sector:

Pakistan's modern food retail sector is growing and ranges from small family-owned to medium and large distribution centers. The well-known European hypermarkets, Metro and Carrefour in collaboration with Pakistani and regional groups, opened several self-service outlets in Karachi, Lahore, Multan, Sialkot, Faisalabad, and Islamabad. These hypermarkets are typically located on 50,000 to 100,000 square feet to take advantage of scale and create a unique one-stop shopping experience, differentiating them from smaller supermarkets and traditional small retailers.

There are also more than one dozen local food retail chains successfully operating in the urban cities of Pakistan. These leading retail chains include Imtiaz, Al-Fatah, Naheed, Greenvalley, Chase-up, Shaheen, D-Watson, Save Mart, Canteen Store Department, and Utility Stores Corporation. Consumers are still interested in foreign brands, but foreign and domestic retailers have faced serious business challenges like Urdu labeling, volatile exchange rate against USD, and unstable economic situation for sourcing these imported products in Pakistan.

Pakistan's e-commerce sector is relatively small but is growing. The size of the online grocery market is difficult to determine. To date, Pakistani consumers have been slow to embrace online shopping, due to the relatively high cost of computers, low internet penetration rates, payment issues, and the need for better delivery options. Modern, online grocery retailers still have a relatively low market share vis-à-vis traditional retail format. The well-known online grocery platforms for urban consumers are Daraz, Foodpanda, Careem, and Cheetay. U.S. retail companies may wish to begin exploring opportunities in Pakistan's growing food retail sector by identifying relevant partners.

Food Service Sector:

The food service industry is capitalizing on changing lifestyles, an expanding young population, the opening of new malls in urban cities, and an increase in the number of working women. Domestic

demand for quick-service food is also growing. Most of the major U.S. chains are in Pakistan, although they are concentrated in large urban centers.

The franchises operating in Pakistan include KFC, McDonald's, Texas Chicken, Domino's, Papa John's, Hardees, Subway, P.F. Chang's, Dunkin Donuts, Baskin Robbins, IHOP, Coffee Beans & Tea Leaf, and Cinnabon. These chains focus on specialized products to attract consumers in the 15-29 age group. Products used by franchise restaurants are generally imported and large international chains will continue to import directly through their agents. Key imports include frozen potato products, cheese, ice cream, dressings, sauces, whipping cream, bakery ingredients, mixes, and condiments.

High-end coffee shops offering specialty and flavored coffees also show promising potential. This trend is being promoted both by international and local coffee chains. Coffee shops tend to use various imported coffee ingredients including creamers, honey, flavorings, and roasted coffee.

Similarly, the number of high-end bakery outlets is growing in the urban areas of Pakistan. These bakeries tend to use imported ingredients including bakery yeast, dough, flavors, icing, and cocoa in their specialized products to improve quality and taste. In addition, the small frozen fruit and vegetable sector is growing to meet the demands of the restaurant sector.

Food Processing Sector:

Accounting for 27 percent of the value-added production and 16 percent of employment in the manufacturing sector, the food and beverage processing industry is the second largest industry after textiles. The major products undergoing value-added transformation are fruits, vegetables, flour, sugar, pulses, grains, frozen and packaged food, edible oil, and dairy products. Food processors regularly introduce new products using improved technology, innovative packaging, and aggressive marketing. For ingredients that are unavailable in Pakistan, processors turn to imports and typically source through importers specializing in food ingredients. U.S. food ingredient imports include dried fruits and nuts, essential oils, protein isolates, starch, vegetable saps, thickeners, lactose, sugar and sugar syrups, mayonnaise, mixed seasonings, sauces and preparations, yeast, milk powder, baking powders, sweeteners, vinegar, and gelatin and gelatin derivatives.

The food processing industry in Pakistan has traditionally been dominated by three international conglomerates, Nestlé (dairy, juices, baby food, cereal, confectionery, and noodles); Unilever (tea, ice cream, dressing, and sauces), and Friesland Campina Engro Foods (milk and cream, tea whitener, and frozen dessert). National Foods, Shan Foods, Mehran Foods (mainly in spices and condiments), and Mitchells Farm (confectionary, jam, and squashes) are a few local renowned food processing companies in Pakistan. Although the consumption of unprocessed meat and seafood remains popular among Pakistani consumers because of its perceived freshness and taste, there is a small, but growing, frozen food sector focusing on processed meat and seafood products, which provides opportunities for U.S. exporters. The increase in demand for frozen foods has been made possible by the increase in malls, supermarkets, hypermarkets, and local manufacturers such as K&N's, Season Foods, Monsalwa, Euro, Sabroso, PK foods, and Sufi foods. These companies have made a significant impact in the market with their ready-to-eat frozen food products.

Although Pakistan is the world’s fourth-largest milk producer, there is a growing demand for imported dairy product ingredients. Opportunities exist for milk powder, cheese, butter, yogurt, ice cream, and ghee. Nurpur, Adams, Deen, and Prema are major dairy-based brands in the market. In the fruits and vegetables sector, there are more than 25 processing plants. Most of these are citrus-based owing to extensive local citrus production (e.g. mandarin, kinnow, grapefruit, sweet orange, bitter orange, lime, and lemon) grown in the Punjab, Sindh, KPK, and Baluchistan provinces. Value-added products include jams, jellies, marmalades, squashes, and canned fruits. Pakistan is a leading producer of mangoes, which are grown in Southern Punjab and Sindh. The major mango processing plants are located in Peshawar, Lahore, and Karachi. Value-added products include jams, jellies, marmalades, squashes, and canned fruits.

The total demand for edible oil is estimated at three million tons. Pakistan produces 23 percent of its oilseeds domestically, with the remaining 77 percent imported. Vegetable oil is used for vegetable ghee and the cooking oil industry. Vegetable oil processing is one of the largest sectors in Pakistan, with around 160 small- and medium-sized vegetable ghee and cooking oil units spread all across Pakistan.

The beverage processing industry is composed of two broad sectors: (1) juices, squashes, and syrups, and (2) carbonated beverages. Both sectors are growing, and major market players include Pepsi, Coca-Cola, Nestle, Mitchells, Shezan, and Maza. Their production units are mostly located in Punjab, specifically the cities of Lahore, Sargodha, and Bahawalpur.

SECTION V: AGRICULTURAL and FOOD IMPORTS

Best Product Prospects:

Products Present in the Market with Good Sales Potential

Description	Imports from the World CY - 2023 (USD million)	Imports from U.S. CY – 2023 (USD million)	Key Constraints	Market Factors
Cotton	1246	809	Price competitiveness with Brazil, Egypt, etc.	Local production is inadequate and long staple fiber is required for export-oriented products. Cotton contamination is a big local issue.
Forestry Products	139	26	Competition from Canada, Europe, Myanmar, Malaysia, and Russia.	Total dependence on imports.
Planting Seeds	130	53	Hybrid corn and vegetable seeds are lacking.	High demand for hybrid seeds to achieve high local production.
Pulses	325	8	Price competitiveness and freight advantage for countries like Myanmar and India.	Local production is inadequate and domestic consumption is met through imports.
Dairy Products	180	16	Competition from foreign suppliers like the EU, Turkey, New Zealand, Poland, and	The increasing popularity of imported brands and shortage of quality domestic products. Demand

			Malaysia.	is growing for powdered milk for processing.
Dairy Cattle	7	3	Competition from countries like Australia, Holland, and Brazil.	Preference for imported animals for higher productivity and better genetic potential.
Tree Nuts	73	16	Competition from Afghanistan and Iran.	Growing seasonal demand, health consciousness, and value additions.

Source: Trade Data Monitor

VI: POST CONTACTS AND FURTHER INFORMATION

Office of the Agricultural Affairs, Foreign Agricultural Service

Embassy of the United States of America, Islamabad, Pakistan

Ph.: (92-51) 201-4920, Fax: (92-51) 227-8142

E-mail: agislamabad@usda.gov

Attachments:

No Attachments