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Report Highlights:

The food processing industry is an important component of Ecuador's manufacturing sector. This sector contributes 56 percent to Ecuador's manufacturing gross domestic product and grossed \$14 billion in net sales. Excellent sales prospects exist for U.S. food ingredient products to supply this industry. This report provides a road map for exporters wishing to enter the market. It provides information on the key channels of distribution for food ingredients and highlights growing product segments including industrially processed foods, beverages, and edible fisheries products. Exporters should be aware of a new regulation to obtain sanitary notifications that may come into force this year. U.S. food ingredient products present exceptional sales opportunities within this industry.

Market Fact Sheet: Ecuador

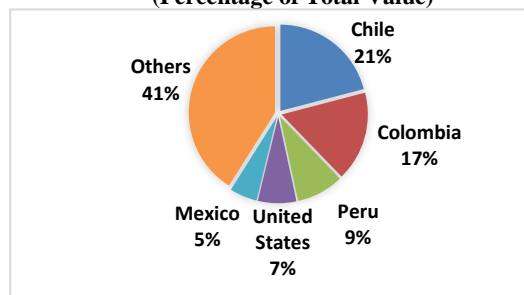
Executive Summary

The food processing industry is a significant component of Ecuador’s manufacturing sector. In 2023, the industry contributed 56 percent to the national manufacturing gross domestic product (GDP). Excellent prospects exist for U.S. food ingredient products to supply this industry.

Imports of Consumer Oriented Products

Imports of consumer-oriented food and agricultural products in 2024 reached US\$ 1.1 billion. Major suppliers included Chile, Colombia, Peru, and the United States.

Imports of Consumer-Oriented Products (Percentage of Total Value)



Food Processing Industry

Food processing is a strong sector in Ecuador’s economy, representing 41 percent of Ecuador’s \$25 billion in non-oil export earnings.

According to the Superintendencia de Compañías, the entity responsible for the registration of all companies in Ecuador, there are currently 1,940 food processing companies operating in the country. These are classified into distinct categories, comprising 61 percent microenterprises, 18 percent small companies, 10 percent medium enterprises, and 11 percent large corporations.

Food Retail Industry

The Economist Intelligence Unit forecasts retail food sales for 2025 at \$26.6 billion and consumer expenditures for food, beverages, and tobacco at \$19 billion. Retail food sales have grown over the past five years at an average rate of 3 percent.

Quick Facts

Import of Agricultural and Food related products in 2024: \$3.9 billion.

Top Imported Agricultural Products to Ecuador:

Soybean Meal	Wheat
Animal Feed	Food Preparations
Soybean Oil	Deciduous Fruits
Corn	Feed, Meals & Fodders
Beer	Sugar & Sugar Confectionary

2023 Food and Agriculture Product Contribution to GDP: \$19.9 billion

Top 5 Ecuador Food Processors:

- Procesadora Nacional de Alimentos C.A. (PRONACA)
- Gisis. S.A.
- La Fabril S.A.
- Cervecería Nacional
- Sociedad Agrícola e Industrial San Carlos S.A.

Top Ecuador Food Retailers:

- Corporación Favorita (Supermaxi, Megamaxi, Aki)
- Corporación El Rosado (Mi Comisariato)
- Supermercados TIA
- Supermercados Santa Maria
- Hypermercados Coral
- Tiendas Tuti

GDP/Population

- Population: 18,309,984 (2024 est.)
- Nominal GDP: \$121 billion (2023 est.)
- GDP per capita: \$14,070 (2024 est. at PPP)

Total Food & Beverage Processors in country: 1940

Sources: Ecuadorian Central Bank, CIA Factbook, The Economist Intelligence Unit, Ecuador Central Bank, Trade Data Monitor, and FAS

Strengths/Weaknesses/Opportunities/Challenges

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> U.S.-origin products are well regarded for their high quality and value. The United States remains Ecuador’s main agricultural trading partner. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> U.S. food and agricultural products are disadvantaged by the absence of a trade agreement with Ecuador. U.S.-origin products tend not to be as price competitive as those from neighboring countries and China.
Opportunities	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New opportunities are developing for exporters of unprocessed raw materials and food ingredients. Local food processing industry struggles to offer competitive market prices. The U.S. Dollar is local currency in Ecuador. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Slow economic growth in Ecuador. Ecuador’s import procedures are cumbersome. U.S. foodstuffs exporters are less aggressive than other trading partners (e.g., Chile) in seeking Ecuadorian sales.

SECTION I. MARKET SUMMARY

Ecuador offers U.S. food and agricultural product exporters several excellent possibilities in the food-processing sector. This growth is notable despite the economic slowdown, with a forecasted growth rate of just 1.4 percent for 2025. The food-processing sector is one of the strongest performing sectors in Ecuador’s economy. The sector is a huge component of the nation’s manufacturing sector, contributing to roughly 56 percent of the country’s gross domestic product (GDP). In 2023, the food-processing sector represented 41 percent of Ecuador’s \$24 billion in non-oil export earnings, or \$10.2 billion. Driving the sector’s growth is the increasing acceptance and consumption of processed food products, which have become an integral part of the national food culture, largely due to the evolving lifestyles of younger generations. The Economist Intelligence Unit forecasts retail food sales for 2025 at \$26.6 billion and consumer expenditures for food, beverages, and tobacco at \$19 billion.

Ecuador’s domestic food processing industry’s main food and beverage sub-sectors include:

- Meat, meat products, and sub-products.
- Processed shrimp.
- Fish and other processed aquatic products.
- Crude and refined animal and vegetable oils.
- Processed dairy products.
- Milling and bakery products, noodles and pasta.
- Sugar and sugar cane products.
- Processed cocoa products, chocolates, and confectionery products.
- Various foodstuffs.
- Beverage products.

Table 1: U.S. Supplier Advantages and Challenges in Ecuador

Advantages	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New opportunities for exporters of unprocessed, raw materials and food ingredients, due to import constraints on a number of processed food products. • The United States remains Ecuador’s main agricultural trading partner. • U.S.-origin products are well regarded for their high quality and value. • Local food processing industry struggles to offer competitive market prices. • The U.S. dollar is local currency in Ecuador. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • U.S. food and agricultural products (including food ingredients) are disadvantaged by the absence of a free trade agreement with Ecuador. • Slow economic growth is expected to remain in coming years. • Ecuador’s cumbersome import procedures. • U.S. exporters are less aggressive than other regional trade partners (e.g., Chile) in tracking Ecuadorian sales. • A quarter of the population is below the poverty line, lacking the financial means to afford imported products. • U.S.-origin products tend not to be as price competitive as those from neighboring countries and China.

The Central Bank of Ecuador (BCE) estimates that food and agricultural products (including livestock, fisheries, aquaculture, and forestry) contributed to at least \$18.7 billion of the country’s GDP in 2023. The food and beverage subsector alone accounted for about \$8.9 billion. In 2023, the pasta and noodles sector grew 37.8 percent, and the milling/processing sector increased 21.4 percent. The non-alcoholic beverage and crude and refined oils sectors shrank approximately 1.9 percent and 3.9 percent,

respectively. Food and beverage processing remains largely concentrated in Ecuador's major urban centers of Quito, Guayaquil, Cuenca, and Manta.

SECTION II. ROAD MAP FOR MARKET ENTRY

A. Entry Strategy

- U.S. food ingredient producers and exporters seeking to enter the Ecuadorian market should contact local food processors directly or work with representatives, agents, or distributors to define the application and product type best suited to meet end user needs. Large companies usually import directly from foreign suppliers. Small and medium-sized enterprises, lacking the ability to purchase large volumes, deal primarily with a representative or distributor. In the case of large volumes, the establishment of a local subsidiary to guarantee services and quality to clients is often advisable.
- U.S. food processing ingredients are well regarded for their high quality and value. To compete with local competitors, U.S. exporters need to offer a combination of quality, competitive pricing, and additional services (i.e., warranties and packaging suited to the local market's standards).
- U.S. exporters should build relationships with importers and distributors through visits to Ecuador. Constant monitoring, support, and ongoing communications with the importer can help offset the freight and tariff advantages of neighboring country exporters.
- Creditworthiness is always a concern. U.S. exporters are advised to avoid offering direct credit lines until their client's creditworthiness is well established. If letters-of-credit are utilized, it is advisable that these be confirmed and that they are irrevocable letters-of-credit.

FAS Quito can provide U.S. exporters with valuable market information, key import contacts, and local legal and business information. Exporters contemplating sales to Ecuador should contact FAS Quito (contact information in Section V) and review our [Exporter Guide](#).

B. Import Procedure

In order to import ingredients and food products for the processing industry, these items must first be classified into different categories: raw materials, processed ingredients, or processed products. The second step is to determine the channel of commercialization since some products need sanitary notifications prior to importation. Depending on the classification, the importer needs to obtain an import permit. Once the import permit is issued, the product can be shipped and proceed through the Ecuadorian Customs process. For more information, please review our [Exporter Guide](#) and [Food and Agricultural Import Regulations and Standards \(FAIRS\) Country Report](#) and [Food and Agricultural Import Regulations and Standards Export Certificate Report](#).

C. Distribution Channels

One way for new market entrants to build sales in Ecuador is by offering a combination of competitive pricing along with profit sharing, promotion cost support, and by engaging in joint product promotions. If it is not possible to penetrate existing distribution channels, exporters can attempt to establish their own distribution channels. Distribution channels in Ecuador will vary between those for domestic and imported products.

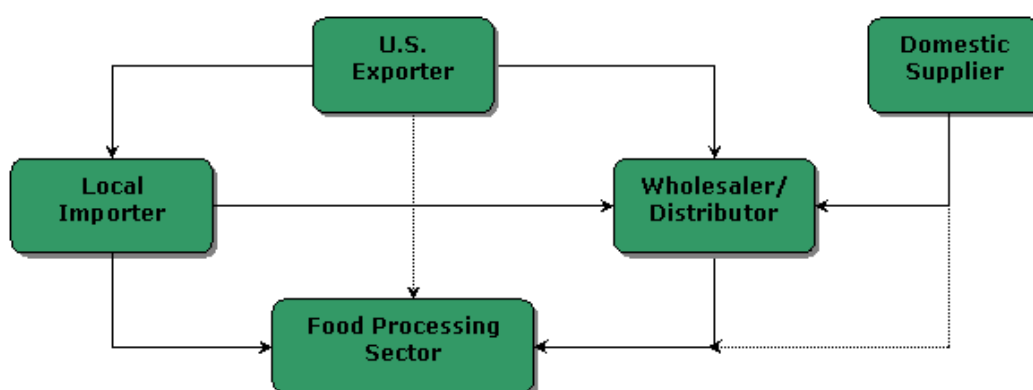
FAS Quito estimates that raw material and food ingredients represent a significant portion of the final purchase price of locally manufactured food products. To maximize returns, local food processors will often seek out more affordable, locally sourced food ingredients. Local food processors tend to purchase directly from foreign suppliers, foregoing the use of brokers. Local companies with low sales

volumes often face higher import related costs. To compensate for these expenses, many of these companies source imported food ingredients from wholesalers who act as importers.

Local food processors sell their products in supermarket chains throughout Ecuador. Based on sales, the main supermarket chains in Ecuador, representing approximately 60 percent of the sector, are *La Favorita (Supermaxi)*, *El Rosado (Mi Comisariato)*, *Tiendas Industriales Asociadas*, *Mega Santa Maria*, and *Hipermercados Coral* are fast growing medium-sized supermarket chains. These same supermarket chains sell imported food products targeting middle and high-income consumers.

D. Market Structure

Figure 1: Market Flow Chart



E. Company Profiles & Company Products

Ecuador’s food processing sector is one of the most successful components of the national economy. The sector benefits from stable, consistent demand for its products. Food and beverage processing companies are significantly enhancing their production output to meet the soaring demand for products, driven by a burgeoning population and rising income levels. Local processing companies are attempting to capitalize on this growth by lobbying the government for support at the expense of imported processed products.

Table 2: Ecuador, Food and Beverage Manufacturing Subsectors, (\$ millions)

Products	Companies by Size				Total Companies (2023)	Net Sales 2023 (\$ million)	Market Share
	Large	Medium	Small	Micro			
Processing and preserving of meat	20	15	21	71	127	\$ 1,970.96	13.8%
Processing and preserving of fish, crustaceans and mollusks	35	20	31	73	159	\$ 2,685.36	18.8%
Processing and preserving of fruit and vegetables	21	20	64	252	357	\$ 736.09	5.2%
Manufacture of vegetable and animal oils and fats	13	7	5	18	43	\$ 1,493.81	10.5%
Manufacture of dairy	15	19	28	78	140	\$ 833.36	5.8%

products							
Manufacture of grain mill products, starches and starch products	18	16	19	64	117	\$ 380.16	2.7%
Manufacture of other food products	50	56	104	327	537	\$ 2,411.31	16.9%
Manufacture of prepared animal feeds	26	16	26	63	131	\$ 2,201.38	15.4%
Manufacture of beverages	16	20	45	248	329	\$ 1,544.98	10.8%
Total	214	189	343	1194	1940	\$ 14,257.42	100%

Source: Superintendencia de Compañías.

F. Sector Trends

Ecuador's larger food and beverage processors have achieved a high degree of industrialization and technical sophistication and represent over 96 percent of the sector's net sales. Small processors rely primarily on less efficient, traditional production methods. Spurring the sector's growth is increased acceptance and consumption of processed food products, which are now a well-established part of the national food culture.

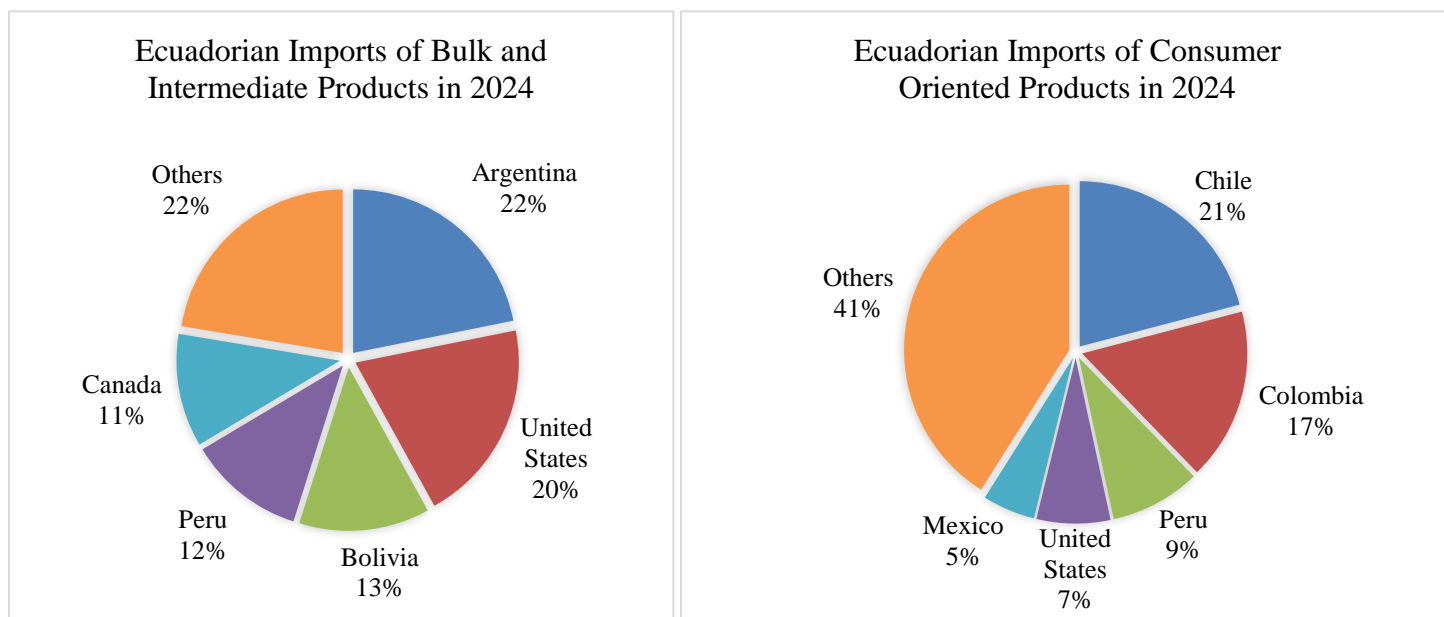
Exchange rate fluctuations between the U.S. dollar and neighboring Latin American currencies frequently compel Ecuadorian importers to source food-processing ingredients from more affordable origins such as Colombia, Chile, Peru, and Mexico. However, promising opportunities for U.S. product remain robust, particularly in categories like processed sugar substitutes, concentrated flavor ingredients, juice concentrates and blends, colorants, cereals, meats, flours, and food extracts.

FAS Quito recommends an Ecuador sales strategy that includes targeting food manufacturers with diversified product lines. One leading food manufacturer alone maintains a portfolio of over 800 products and 26 brands. The fastest growing processed food products in the Ecuadorian market are pre-cooked or easy to prepare meals that utilize a high proportion of imported food ingredients and seasonings.

SECTION III. COMPETITION

U.S. food ingredients face strong competition from Latin American producers. Exports from neighboring countries, benefitting from a closer proximity, are more competitive due to lower shipping costs. Import tariffs levied on U.S. food ingredients are higher than those levied against neighboring countries and European products that benefit from free trade agreements.

Figure 2 and 3: Food Imports by Category and Supplier



Source: FAS Quito research and Trade Data Monitor

Domestic food manufacturers in Ecuador are significantly dependent on local food ingredients, prompting the government to implement measures aimed at restricting imports to bolster local production and promote greater domestic utilization. Additionally, the government is focused on enhancing production capacities for regional export markets. Ecuadorian companies often turn to international sources for specialized food ingredients, including flavoring agents, colorants, preserving agents, and emulsifiers. These essential products are primarily imported from the United States and the European Union, as Ecuador currently lacks the capacity to produce them in sufficient volumes to meet domestic demand.

Ecuador is heavily dependent on imported wheat, soybean oil, and soybean meal. It is also an importer of fish products, crustaceans, and mollusks for further processing and commercialization. Additionally, Ecuador imports pre-mix ingredients for pet food and related products.

Table 3: Competitive Situation Facing U.S. Suppliers

Product Category	Major Import Supply Sources in 2024	Strengths of Key Supply Countries	Advantages and Disadvantages of Local Suppliers
Prepared animal food residues and waste from the food industry; prepared animal feed Net imports: 2,237,395 MT US\$1,367 million	Argentina: 37% United States: 29% Bolivia: 18%	Main suppliers offer a number of products not produced locally.	Local industry is diversifying and offering competitive pricing.
Preparations of food;	Colombia: 25%	Suppliers produce	National production is small

miscellaneous Net imports: 32,881 MT US\$307.7 million	Peru: 12% United States: 12%	ingredients that do not exist in the country.	and deficient.
Seafood Net imports: 175,842 MT US\$215 million	Peru: 30% Panama: 15% International Waters: 13%	Peru is a major supplier of anchovies representing about 50% of imports.	Ecuador is a major Latin American tuna fish processor.
Prepared fruit, vegetables, and nuts Net imports: 59,545 MT US\$115 million	Chile: 22% Greece: 13% Peru: 11%	Chilean products are highly price competitive.	Year-round domestic production is limited by lack of technology.
Sugars and sugar confectionery Net imports: 167,250 MT US\$143.2 million	Colombia: 41% Peru: 40% China: 5%	Colombian and Peruvian sugar products are tariff exempt.	Domestic production is less competitive than imported product.
Dairy products Net imports: 13,117 MT US\$71.1 million	United States: 19% Chile: 16% Mexico: 15%	Suppliers offer a number of products not produced locally.	Domestic production is protected by the government.
Milling products Net imports: 69,642 MT US\$47.3 million	Chile: 31% Colombia: 24% China: 13%	Colombia, an Andean Community member, is tariff exempt.	A local oligopoly controls pricing.
Meats & Offal Net imports: 8,256 MT US\$35.6 million	Chile: 47% Bolivia: 17% United States: 14%	Chile is highly price competitive in cattle offal and pork products	Quality concerns with informal sector production.
Fruit and Vegetable Juices Net imports: 1,976 MT US\$6.9 million	Chile: 22% Argentina: 17% Brazil: 15%	Chile and Argentina's products are price competitive.	Growing product diversification by importing bulk and bottling locally.

Source: FAS Quito research and Trade Data Monitor

SECTION IV. BEST PRODUCT PROSPECTS

There are excellent prospects for high-quality U.S. food ingredient products, including artificial flavorings, colorants, preservatives, and spices. Additionally, items such as wheat, soybean flour, yellow corn, fruit juices and concentrates, glucose syrup, whey, and lactose also show significant potential in the Ecuadorian market. The following tables rank these product categories based on the perceived potential identified by FAS Quito.

Table 4: Category A: Products Present in the Market which have Good Sales Potential

Product Category	2021 Imports (US\$ Millions)	5-Yr. Avg. Annual Import Growth (Volume)	Import Tariff Rate	Key Constraints for Market Development	Market Attractiveness for the United States
Preparations of food, miscellaneous	\$307.7	2.2%	10% - 30%	Colombia and Peru dominate imports. Products require sanitary notification	Domestic production is limited; opportunities exist for high quality U.S. products.
Cereals and milling products	\$643.6	8.1%	20% - 30%	Local oligopoly controls the industry, including price fixing. Some products may require sanitary notification.	The United States and Canada supply 24% and 63% of Ecuador's cereal needs, respectively; insufficient domestic production.
Fruit and vegetable juices	\$6.9	8.7%	30%	Chile and Argentina are highly price competitive. Some products may require a sanitary notification.	Domestic production is slow to launch new brands; local production costs are high, so most companies import bulk to bottle locally.
Meat and meat products	\$35.6	8.3%	20% - 85%	Import licenses and plant registration are required. Some products may require sanitary notification.	U.S. products are recognized for their quality. Many products are commonly used in the deli meats industry.
Dairy products	\$71.1	4.7%	25% - 30%	National production is promoted. Regional suppliers are main suppliers. Some products may require sanitary notification	Specialty U.S. products are not available in the region.

Table 5: Category B: Products Not Present in Significant Quantities, but with Good Sales Potential

Product Category	Import Tariff Rate	Key Constraints for Market Development	Market Attractiveness for the United States
Basic chemical products for the preparation of food	0% - 5%	Lack of accurate market information.	Tariffs are minimal.
Crude and refined oil and fat	0% - 20%	Domestic manufacturing is diversified. Some products may require sanitary notification.	Consumers are increasingly demanding healthier corn and canola oil; Ecuador mainly produces palm oil.
Seeds and dry fruits	0% - 10%	Chile is a major supplier that benefits from competitive pricing and shipping cost advantages. Some products may require sanitary notification.	Importers prefer U.S. products based on taste preferences.

Table 6: Category C: Product Not Present Because They Face Significant Barriers

Product Category	Import Tariff Rate	Key Constraints for Market Development	Market Attractiveness for the United States
Cheeses	20%-25%	Dairy sector is protected and import licenses are usually denied.	Local cheese production is not diversified.
Whey	5%-30%	Dairy sector is protected and import licenses are usually denied.	Small local production.
Poultry Meat	45%-85%	Poultry sector is protected and import licenses are usually denied.	Local production cost high.

SECTION V. KEY CONTACTS AND FURTHER INFORMATION

For additional information, see www.fas.usda.gov or e-mail the Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) Office of Agricultural Affairs in Quito at: agquito@fas.usda.gov. See also FAS Quito's [Exporter Guide](#), [FAIRS Country Report](#), and [FAIRS Export Certificate Report](#) for Ecuador, where you will find contact information for Ecuador's regulatory agencies, a list of ministries responsible for food policies, a graph of import policies, and other valuable contact information

Attachments:

No Attachments