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**Country:** Italy

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**Report Highlights:**

The Italian food-processing industry continues to be highly fragmented, characterized by a growing consolidation of smaller companies. Progress in food technology, marketing innovations, “Made in Italy” products, and exports of finished food products have all contributed to Italy’s increasing demand for food ingredients. Italy’s food-processing industry played a key role in 2020, with food manufacturers working relentlessly to ensure food availability, mainly to food retailers, as consumers’ demand increased rapidly, especially in the early stages of the Covid-19 pandemic. Italy depends almost entirely on raw material imports, most of which come from other EU countries.

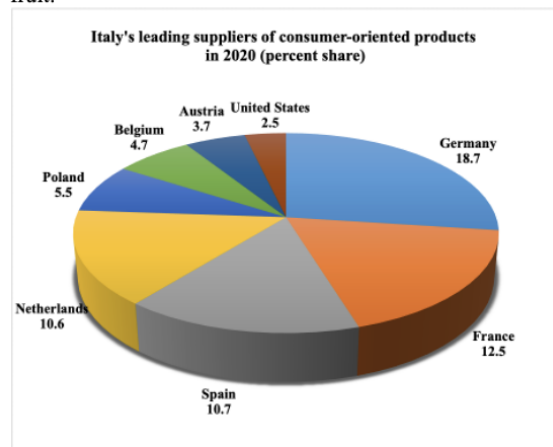
# Market Fact Sheet: Italy

## Executive Summary

Italy is the third-largest economy in the euro-zone, with a GDP estimated at \$1.9 trillion and a per capita GDP of \$31,630. Being a net agricultural importer, most raw materials and ingredients are imported, as Italy's economic strength is in the processing and the manufacturing of goods. Italy exports mainly consumer-oriented products to the United States, while the United States exports mostly bulk commodities to Italy. In 2020, U.S. agricultural exports to Italy were \$1.0 billion, while U.S. imports from Italy were \$5.5 billion.

## Imports of Consumer-Oriented Products

In 2020, Italy's imports of consumer-oriented products were approximately \$25.6 billion, of which 81 percent originating from other EU-27 member states. Imports from the EU-27 were primarily dairy products, meat, and fresh fruit.



## Food Processing Industry

The Italian food-processing industry is highly fragmented, characterized by a growing consolidation of smaller companies. Progress in food technology, marketing innovations, "Made in Italy" products, and exports of finished food products have all contributed to Italy's increasing demand for food ingredients. Italian consumers continue to favor bakery products, processed meat and seafood, and dairy products.

## Food Retail Industry

The Italian food retail industry is highly diversified. Hypermarkets, supermarkets, convenience stores, major discount stores, and specialized stores coexist with traditional corner grocery stores and open-air markets. Italy's food retail sales reached \$175 billion in 2020, 5.6 percent more than 2019. While on-line grocery shopping grew by 140 percent, increased sales were also registered in discount stores (+9.1 percent) and grocery retailers (+5.8 percent). Conversely, sales in hypermarkets (-2.8 percent) were penalized by the closure of shopping centers during COVID-19 lockdown.

## Quick Facts CY 2020

**Imports of Consumer-Oriented Products:** \$25.6 billion

### List of Top 10 Growth Products in Italy

- 1) Baked goods
- 2) Processed meat and seafood
- 3) Dairy products
- 4) Ice cream and frozen desserts
- 5) Pasta and rice
- 6) Confectionary
- 7) Savory snacks
- 8) Sauces, dressings, and condiments
- 9) Sweet biscuits, snacks bars, and fruit snacks
- 10) Ready meals

### Food Industry by Channels (\$ billion)

Food Industry Output	\$169.5
Food Exports	\$45.4
Food Imports	\$25.6
Retail	\$175.0
Food Service	\$62.6

### Top 10 Italian Retailers

- 1) Conad
- 2) Coop Italia
- 3) Selex Gruppo Commerciale SpA
- 4) Esselunga SpA
- 5) Crai Secom SpA
- 6) Gruppo V&G
- 7) Gruppo Eurospin
- 8) Schwarz Gruppe
- 9) Carrefour SA
- 10) Spar Intl.

### GDP/Population

Population: 60.3 million  
 GDP: 1.9 trillion  
 GDP per capita: \$31,630

## Strengths/Weaknesses/Opportunities/Threats

Strengths	Weaknesses
Italy's food consumption levels are among the highest in the world.	Competition from EU countries that export to Italy tariff-free.
Opportunities	Threats
Italy is dependent on raw imports for its processed food industry. Italian food products have a reputation for being of high quality.	Non-tariff barriers, including traceability requirements, can hinder U.S. exports.

## Data and Information Sources:

TDM (Trade Data Monitor), Euromonitor, industry contacts.

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## SECTION I. MARKET SUMMARY

The Italian food-processing industry continues to be highly fragmented, characterized by a growing consolidation of smaller companies. Progress in food technology, marketing innovations, “Made in Italy” products, and exports of finished food products have all contributed to Italy’s increasing demand for food ingredients. Italy’s food-processing industry played a key role in 2020, with food manufacturers working relentlessly to ensure food availability, mainly to food retailers, as consumers’ demand increased rapidly, especially in the early stages of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Stockpiling and home-cooking trends boosted sales of staple foods and cooking ingredients, such as pasta, rice, processed meat and seafood, fruits and vegetables, edible oils, sauces, dressings, and condiments. Moreover, Covid-19 accelerated Italy’s healthy eating trend, with vegan, vegetarian, and flexitarian alternatives, “free-from” products (e.g. gluten, lactose, or sugar-free), and superfoods attracting more and more local consumers. Additionally, legume-based snacks and pasta, and rich-in-protein foods were high in demand. The pandemic also strengthened the locally sourced food trend as a gesture of solidarity to local producers.

Italy depends almost entirely on raw material imports, most of which come from other EU countries. In 2020, U.S. agricultural exports to Italy were \$1.0 billion, while U.S. imports from Italy were \$5.5 billion.

### U.S. - Italy Agricultural Trade 2020

U.S. leading exports to Italy	Italian leading exports to the United States
Tree nuts: \$314.4 million	Wine: \$2.1 billion
Wheat: \$216.3 million	Baked goods, cereals, and pasta: \$754 million
Soybeans: \$148.1 million	Olive oil: \$533.9 million
Planting seeds: \$56.6 million	Non-alcoholic beverages: \$358.8 million
Distilled spirits: \$41.2 million	Condiments and sauces: \$345.9 million
<b>Total: \$1.0 billion</b>	<b>Total: \$5.5 billion</b>

Source: BICO

Advantages	Challenges
Italy’s food consumption levels are among the highest in the world.	Competition from EU countries that export to Italy tariff-free.
Italy is the third largest market in Europe for food and drink in terms of value, and there is a reliable affluent consumer base for such products.	U.S. exporters have significantly higher transportation costs and time lags than most other European countries, given the distance between Italy and the United States.
Italy is highly dependent on raw imports for its processed food industry.	Non-tariff barriers, including traceability requirements, can hinder U.S. exports. Moreover, U.S. exporters new to the Italian market may find the Italian bureaucracy difficult to maneuver.
Italians are becoming more aware of foreign ingredients and cuisines.	U.S. products and ingredients, while innovative, may be perceived as overly processed and less wholesome than their

	Italian/European counterparts, which are marketed as traditional and seen as having more “natural” ingredients.
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## SECTION II. ROAD MAP FOR MARKET ENTRY

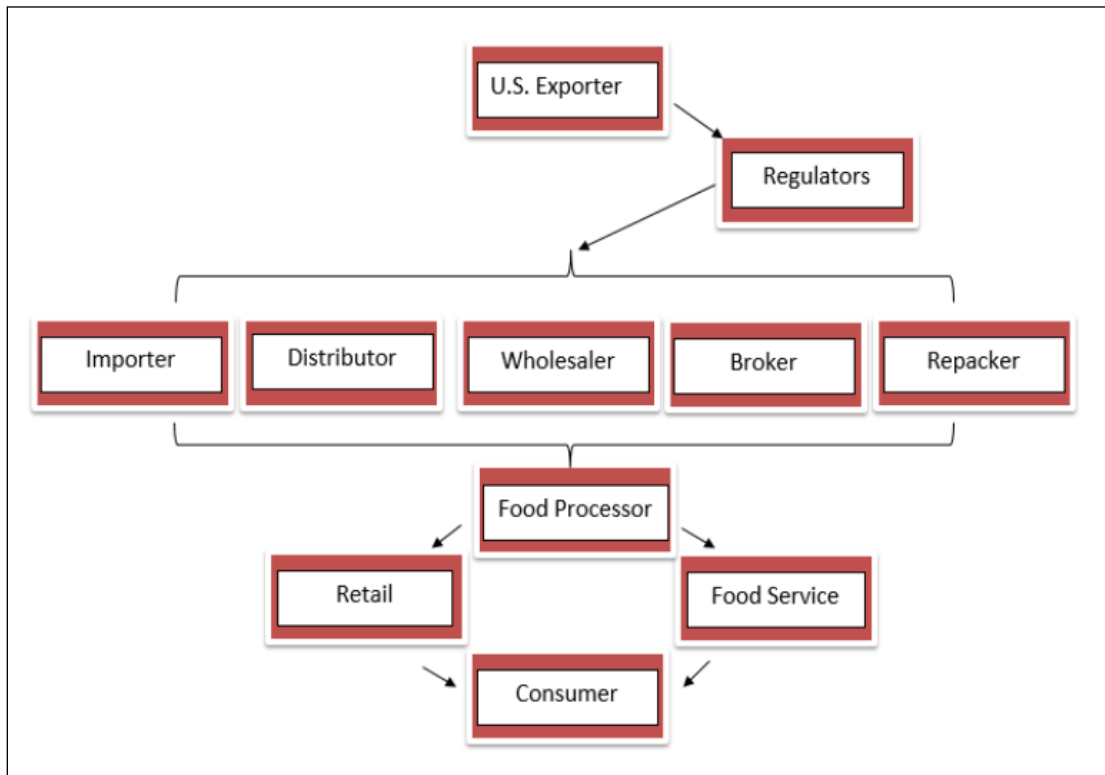
### ○ **Entry Strategy**

- Survey existing and potential opportunities by reviewing [FAS GAIN](#) reports and consider engaging a market research firm to assist in analyzing market opportunities and challenges.
- Identify a key importer, broker, distributor, agent, or wholesaler, as they know how to best navigate the import and distribution process. They are key to doing business in Italy. Food importing is a specialized business, and an importer plays a pivotal role in navigating the hurdles of Italian and EU food law. Italian importers are mostly small to medium-sized companies and normally carry a whole range of products. The terms and length of association between the U.S. company and the Italian company are normally established by contract.
- Price is always important, although quality and novelty alone do move some imported products.
- Be prepared to start small by shipping a few pallets or cases of a product and recognize that it could take several months or years before an importer is ready to order full containers. Italians place a lot of importance on first building the trust to consolidate the business relationship.
- Be willing to meet special EU labeling requirements and consider working through a consolidator or participating in mixed container shipments.
- Participation in some of the larger European international food trade shows (ANUGA, SIAL, and TUTTOFOOD) offers a good opportunity to get a sense of the Italian market and meet with potential Italian importers or distributors.

### ○ **Import Procedure**

- All imports are covered under EU regulations.
- Work with experienced distributor or independent reliable agent to counsel on import duties, sanitary regulations, and labeling requirements. Personal relationships and language ability are of value when conducting business transactions.
- Imports from a third country must clearly identify country of origin.
- Custom duties are applied to all products and rates depend on product being processed or unprocessed.
- Imported products from North America often enter Italy indirectly from the Port of Rotterdam or directly by air.

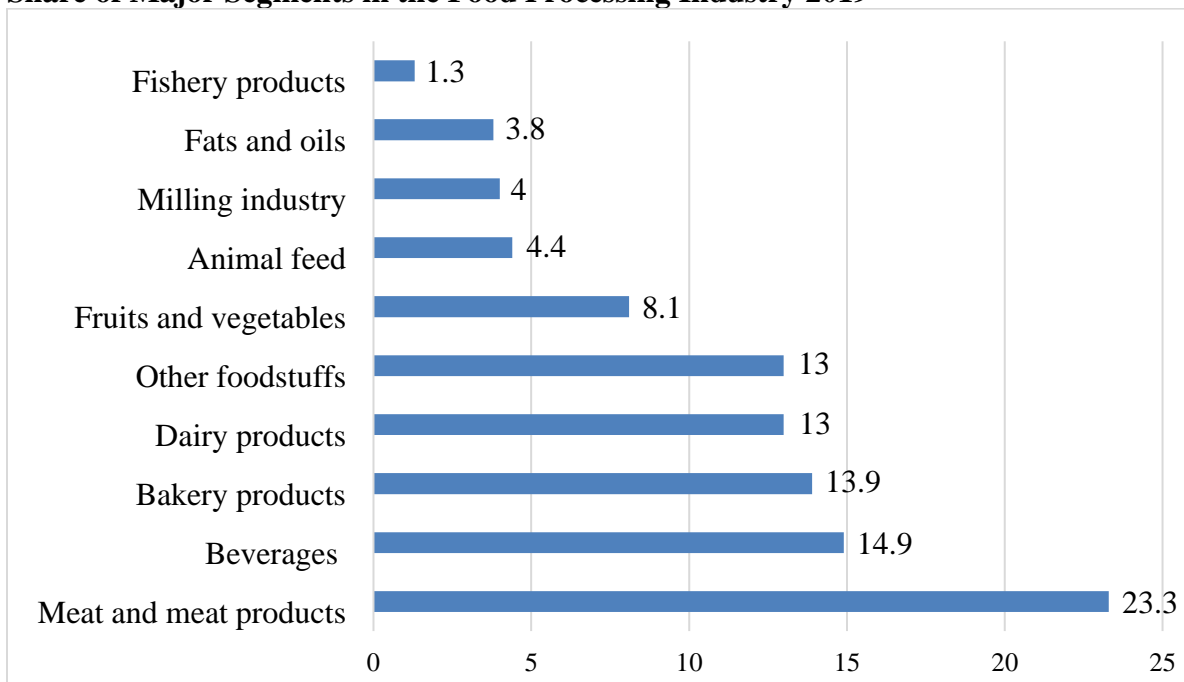
○ **Distribution Channels**



○ **Market Structure**

- Italy’s food processing industry is well developed and has access to a wide range of food ingredients and suppliers.
- Italian producers source their ingredients from brokers, agents, local importers, and wholesalers. Only large processors import ingredients directly from foreign suppliers.
- Processed food is primarily distributed through retail grocers, convenience, and discount stores.
- U.S. exporters of food processing ingredients usually enter the Italian market through a specialized ingredients importer.
- A good importer will be your partner in promoting your product to his or her customers.
- The most common entry strategy for small-and medium-sized U.S. companies is dealing either directly with a local wholesaler or broker or indirectly through an export agent or consolidator.

○ **Share of Major Segments in the Food Processing Industry 2019**



Source: Italy's Institute of Statistics (ISTAT); industry contacts

○ **Leading Food Processing Companies**

**Meat and meat products**

Gruppo Cremonini - <https://www.cremonini.com/>

Consorzio del Prosciutto di Parma - <https://www.prosciuttodiparma.com/>

Fratelli Beretta - <http://www.fratelliberetta.com/>

Gruppo Veronesi - <http://www.gruppoveronesi.it/bpweb/SitoVeronesi.nsf/home>

Amadori - <https://www.amadori.it/amadori/storia>

Ferrarini - <https://en.ferrarini.com/>

**Pasta**

Barilla - <https://www.barilla.com/it-it>

**Bakery products**

Mulino Bianco - <https://www.mulinobianco.com/>

Bauli SpA - <https://www.bauli.it/>

**Dairy products**

Galbani - <http://www.gruppolactalisitalia.com/hubpage/>

Granarolo - <https://www.granarologroup.com/>

Parmalat - <http://www.parmalat.com/en/>

### **Chocolate and sweets**

Ferrero - <https://www.ferrero.it/>

Perfetti Van Melle Group - <http://www.perfettivanmelle.com/>

Nestle' Italia - <https://www.nestle.it/>

### **Frozen fruits and vegetables**

Findus - <https://www.findus.it/noi-di-findus/findus-storia>

Coop (Private label) - <https://www.cooponline.it/>

Orologel - <https://www.orogel.it/>

#### ○ **Sector Trends**

- Ageing population and increased health consciousness of consumers is fueling Italy's demand for health and wellness products, as well as functional food products.
- Locally grown, but also ethnic, vegan, vegetarian, and flexitarian alternatives, and “free from” products (e.g. gluten, lactose, or sugar free) attract more and more Italian consumers.
- Demographic evolution is driving changes in consumer buying habits, as single and two person households are growing, while households of four or more persons declining.
- Consumers increasingly require traceability and information about production methods.

## **SECTION III. COMPETITION**

Italy's main trading partner is the EU-27, supplying approximately 70 percent of the total agricultural products, and nearly 81 percent of consumer-oriented products. Proximity and price make the EU-27 more attractive and competitive.

### **Italy's leading suppliers of consumer-oriented products**

Partner Country	January - December (Value: USD)			Market Share (%)			%Δ 2020/19
	2018	2019	2020	2018	2019	2020	
World	26,925,792,202	26,840,944,494	25,560,479,575	100	100	100.01	-4.77
EU-27	22,317,634,539	22,128,615,323	20,768,755,468	82.89	82.44	81.25	-6.15
Germany	5,676,900,683	5,298,417,046	4,771,655,611	21.08	19.74	18.67	-9.94
France	3,483,662,221	3,331,726,888	3,196,663,142	12.94	12.41	12.51	-4.05
Spain	2,693,227,666	2,927,623,425	2,743,910,066	10	10.91	10.74	-6.28
Netherlands	2,907,156,060	2,582,441,552	2,697,886,040	10.80	9.62	10.56	4.47
Poland	1,601,336,100	1,601,903,315	1,399,813,890	5.95	5.97	5.48	-12.62
Belgium	1,340,233,553	1,355,083,339	1,214,750,093	4.98	5.05	4.75	-10.36
Austria	996,408,592	1,004,611,826	946,241,709	3.70	3.74	3.70	-5.81
Czech Republic	540,562,248	684,887,346	729,124,086	2.01	2.55	2.85	6.46

United States	581,920,499	689,522,351	645,047,002	2.16	2.57	2.52	-6.45
Romania	522,594,517	536,158,404	568,856,128	1.94	2	2.23	6.10

Source: Trade Data Monitor (TDM)

### Competitive situation for selected consumer-oriented products

Commodity	Italy's imports from the world 2020	Italy's imports from the United States 2020	Key constraints over market development	Market attractiveness for the United States
Pork meat and products	\$2.3 billion	\$684,912	Competition from other EU countries, mainly Germany, Spain, the Netherlands, and France	Growing consumers' demand.
Tree nuts	\$1.6 billion	\$347.9 million	Competition from Turkey, Chile, and Spain.	Growing demand from manufacturers, confectionary, and snack industry.
Bakery goods	\$1.3 billion	\$768,709	Competition from other EU countries, mainly Germany, France, Austria, and Spain.	Growing demand from consumers and manufacturers.
Food preparations	\$747.5 million	\$6.7 million	Competition from other EU countries, mainly Germany, the Netherlands, and France.	Growing demand from consumers.
Beer	\$547.7 million	\$1.8 million	Competition from other EU countries, mainly Belgium and Germany. Transport costs and time.	Italian drinking culture is changing. The beer market is growing with new breweries and pubs where high quality beer is served at reasonable prices.

Source: TDM



#### **SECTION IV. BEST PRODUCT PROSPECTS CATEGORIES**

- **Products present in the market which have good sales potential**
  - Tree nuts
  - Food preparations
  - Snack foods
  - Sauces, dressings, and condiments
  
- **Products not present in significant quantities, but which have good sales potential**
  - Functional and health food
  - Free-from products (lactose-free, gluten-free, sugar-free)
  - Specialty foods
  - Organic products
  
- **Products not present in the market because they face significant barriers**
  - Beef, other than that sold through the High Quality Beef Quota
  - Poultry (sanitary procedures – chlorine wash)
  - Processed food products containing genetically engineered (GE) ingredients

#### **SECTION V. KEY CONTACTS AND FURTHER INFORMATION**

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E-mail: [agrome@fas.usda.gov](mailto:agrome@fas.usda.gov)

Tel: (011)-(39)-06-4674-2396

Fax: (011)-(39)-06-4788-7008

Webpage: <https://it.usembassy.gov/embassy-consulates/rome/sections-offices/fas/>

FAS Italy publishes numerous market and commodity reports available through the Global Agricultural Information Network (GAIN) at:

[www.fas.usda.gov/data/search?f\[0\]=field\\_countries%3A39&f\[1\]=field\\_countries%3A371](http://www.fas.usda.gov/data/search?f[0]=field_countries%3A39&f[1]=field_countries%3A371)

#### **Attachments:**

No Attachments