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Honduras

Exporter Guide

2016

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Report Highlights:

The growth of the food processing industry, the expansion of supermarkets in urban areas, in addition to the developing hotel, restaurant, and institutional sector have advanced exports of U.S. agricultural products to Honduras.

Post:

Tegucigalpa

Executive Summary:

The United States is the main trading partner with Honduras, both in terms of total trade and in agricultural products. U.S. agricultural exports increased with the implementation of the United States – Central America - Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR). Honduras was the second country to ratify CAFTA-DR, and it entered into force on April 1, 2006. A wide variety of U.S. agricultural products have duty-free access with CAFTA-DR. As of October 2016, the total U.S. agricultural, fish, and forestry exports to Honduras were valued at \$541 million. This amount denotes a 16 percent increase of exports compared to October 2015. Regional integration should spur investment, growth, trade, and continued market opportunities for U.S. exporters in the coming years.

I. MARKET OVERVIEW**A. Economic Situation**

The United States is the main trading partner with Honduras, both in terms of total trade and in agricultural products. The estimated economically active population in 2015 was 3.9 million people (1.8 million are located in the rural areas and 2.1 million in urban areas).

Honduras's economic activity is directly linked to the United States as follows:

- Agricultural imports from the U.S. were 38 percent of total agricultural imports in 2015.
- Honduras agricultural exports to the United States were 39 percent of total exports in 2015.

Exports have diversified from bananas and coffee to non-traditional products.

- Per capita Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was \$2,397 in 2015, with 3.6 percent growth from 2014.
- Inflation average rate was 3.1 percent in 2015.
- Main economic sectors that contributed to GDP were: manufacturing 19 percent, financial

activities 17 percent, agriculture 14 percent, and communications 10 percent.

- The agricultural sector provided the most employment generation of all sectors with 28 percent. Despite the recent economic diversification, there continues to be a large subsistence farmer population with few economic opportunities.
- The value of 2015 remittances was \$3,650 million, an increase of nine percent from the previous year. Remittances accounted for 18 percent of GDP generating higher revenue to the GDP than coffee exports and tourism combined.
- U.S. foreign direct investment reached \$137 million in 2015.
- The United States is the third largest investor in Honduras after Panama and Canada, and has helped foster foreign direct investment.
- The largest U.S. investments are in the garment assembly sector, tropical fruit production (bananas, melons, and pineapple), tourism, energy generation, shrimp farming, animal feed production, telecommunications, fuel distribution, cigar manufacturing, insurance, leasing, food processing, and furniture manufacturing.
- The banking system has been strengthened by alliances with international banks.

B. Market Growth

U.S. exporters enjoy a strong position in the Honduran market; a position which was improved by the CAFTA-DR agreement. As of October 2016, U.S exports of agricultural and related products to Honduras had a 16 percent increase compared to October 2015. It should be noted that U.S. agricultural exports are stable even when faced with a 15 percent value added tax on all imports imposed by the local government in 2013. The top ten U.S. agricultural exports to Honduras are: soybean meal, corn, rice, wheat, pork and pork products, prepared food, dairy products, poultry meat and products, fresh fruit, and condiments and sauces.

Honduras's tariffs on most goods outside the Central American Common Market (CACM) are currently

within the zero to 15 percent range. The exceptions are white and yellow corn, as well as rice which has an in-quota tariff rate quota of zero. However, the out-of-quota tariff was 45 percent for white corn, 41.2 percent for rice; and 24.1 percent for yellow corn in 2016. Under CAFTA-DR, about 80 percent of U.S. industrial and commercial goods can enter the region duty-free, with the remaining tariffs to be phased out from four to nine years. Enhanced by increased market access, U.S. agricultural exports over the past decade to Honduras have increased both in terms of value and market share.

Under CAFTA-DR, Honduras recognizes the U.S. inspection services as equivalent. This equivalence eliminates the requirement of a certification by Honduras of the U.S. plant to export to the Honduran market, which facilitates trade.

C. Market Opportunities and Competitiveness

The strengths, market opportunities, and challenges of U.S. suppliers are illustrated in the following table:

ADVANTAGES	CHALLENGES
Close proximity to the United States allows containerized cargo from gateway cities to be transported to Honduras in 2 to 3 days. With one of the lowest logistical costs in the region, Honduras also serves as a distribution point for Central America.	Direct competition from other Central American countries. FTAs have been signed with the Dominican Republic, Mexico, Chile, Colombia, Panama, Canada European Union and Taiwan.
CAFTA-DR eliminated most tariffs and other barriers to United States goods destined for the Central American market, protects U.S. investments and intellectual property, and creates more transparent rules and procedures for doing business.	Maintaining macro-economic stability and fostering an environment for investment.
Consumers have strong preferences for U.S. products. U.S. products enjoy a high-quality image among Hondurans. Importers prefer trading with U.S. exporters because of reliability.	The current economic situation in the country limits purchasing power and customers are price sensitive.
Among the leading sectors for U.S. exports and investment are: fast food outlets, casual dining restaurants, and the introduction of new U.S. hotel chains-including investment prime tourist areas-food processing and packaging equipment, processed foods, and general consumer goods.	Relative high duties on some products that are not under the CAFTA-DR agreement.
Increases in infrastructure and facilities have permitted the year-round availability of U.S. fruits such as apples, grapes, and pears. Direct imports by warehouse outlets have diversified foods imports.	Occasionally restrictive sanitary and phytosanitary import requirements.

II. EXPORTER BUSINESS TIPS

A. Business Customs

The Honduran government is generally open to foreign investment. Restrictions and performance requirements are fairly limited. Relatively low labor costs, proximity to the U.S. market, and the Caribbean port (Puerto Cortés is the largest deep-water port in the region) have made Honduras attractive to investors.

Under CAFTA-DR, U.S. investors enjoy, in most circumstances, the right to establish, acquire, and operate investments in Honduras on an equal footing with local investors. In the investment chapter of CAFTA-DR, Honduras committed to provide a higher level of protection for U.S. investors than under the 2001 Bilateral Investment Treaty. Exporters who offer attractive financing terms on sales have the best chance of gaining market share.

As in most Latin American countries, a good personal relationship with prospective customers is required in order to penetrate the market. While it may take a little longer to establish a business relationship than is customary in the United States, the investment in time can pay off in long-lasting and mutually profitable alliances. Although a U.S. firm may export directly to Honduran companies, U.S. suppliers are strongly recommended to have a local representative or a distributor who can personally travel to Honduras.

B. Consumer Tastes and Preferences

Honduran preference for U.S. products has increased steadily over the years. The number of U.S. franchises and subsidiaries or affiliates operating in Honduras has grown rapidly. About 162 U.S. firms now operate in Honduras; 54 of these firms are U.S. fast-food and casual restaurants with more than 300 establishments in the country. In addition, Honduran consumers traditionally prefer the quality, convenience, and wholesomeness of U.S. products. Some companies are combining Honduran and American foods as an attractive tool in restaurants.

C. Food Standards and Import Regulations

The institutions responsible for food matters are the Secretariat of Agriculture and Livestock (SAG) and the Secretariat of Health (MOH). The National Plant, Animal Health and Food Safety Service (SENASA) is SAG's regulatory agency. SENASA establishes regulations, procedures, and oversees compliance regarding plant, animal health, and the food safety of agricultural products imported and exported. SENASA issues import permits for plant, animal, processed, and consumer ready food products and inputs used in food processing that enter Honduras.

The MOH agency responsible for regulations of foods products approved to be sold in Honduras is the General Directorate of Surveillance of the Health Normative Framework (DGVMN). The objective of the DGVMN is to secure the food safety of processed products that are sold to consumers at the retail and wholesale levels.

The standards and import regulations of the above mentioned institutions are found in the following GAIN reports for Honduras: Food and Agricultural Import Regulations and Standards (FAIRS)

Country Report Number HO1606, and FAIRS Export Certificate Report Number HO1607.

The exporter should take into account some key aspects in the compliance of the regulations established by SENASA and the DGVM in the following:

- **Certificate of Origin:** The certificate must clearly show that the product originated in the United States. Under CAFTA-DR, the certificate must be signed by the exporter, the importer or the producer; and the signatory must clearly be a business located in a treaty country. This is a requirement to demonstrate eligibility for preferential tariff treatment. For further information please see the Honduras GAIN Report: Food and Agricultural Import Regulations and Standards (FAIRS) Export Certificate Report Number HO1607.
- **Certificate of Free Sale (CFS).** The certificate indicates that the exporter has permit to produce, manufacture, distribute, and pack processed food products for human consumption. The certificate is issued by the appropriate federal or state-level health authorities. For registration purposes, the CFS should be accompanied by a document that provides an endorsement of the signatures that appear on the CFS. This document can be an Apostille or an Autentica – notarized document. For further information please see the Honduras GAIN Report: Food and Agricultural Import Regulations and Standards (FAIRS) Export Certificate Report Number HO1607.
- **Production, Expiration date and Lot number.** This information should appear in Spanish on the shipping carton(s). The dates must be provided in the Day/Month/Year format (DD/MM/YYYY). If a first-time exporter does not comply with this requirement, the product is retained and SENASA/SEPA allows a label to be applied. However, if the exporter has not repeatedly had the required labels, the product is not allowed entry.
- **Phyto or Zoosanitary Certificates.** SENASA requires that the certificates be filled out completely with the name, date and signature of the official issuing the certificate and the Additional Declarations requested in the import permit.

D. General Import and Inspection Procedures:

SENASA delegated the responsibility of all quarantine inspections and treatments of agricultural imports to the International Regional Organization for Plant and Animal Health (OIRSA). OIRSA's Plant and Animal Protection Service (SEPA) inspectors are located at the borders, ports, and airports. They follow SENASA's instructions to enforce the import requirements of raw animal and plant products, processed and consumer ready foods, as well as inputs used in food processing imports at the

time of entry.

SEPA and inspectors from the Honduran Customs Authority (DARA) are involved in clearing imports of food and agricultural products. SEPA inspectors review all the documents provided and conduct an inspection of the product at the port-of-entry.

SEPA and inspectors from the Honduran Customs Authority (DARA) are involved in clearing imports of food and agricultural products. They evaluate documents and conduct an inspection for the compliance of requirements indicated on the import permit and import documents such as:

- The original import permit approved by SENASA, the original Phyto or Zoosanitary Certificate and Commercial Invoice . Additional supporting papers to collate data of the shipment's content such as Bill of Lading and Packing List.
- Additional Declarations requested in the Phyto or Zoosanitary Certificates, if the country of origin of the product is the one authorized on the import permit; and if it is the same origin in the label of the product entering the country.
- Expiration date, lot number and production date appear in Spanish on the shipping carton (s). The dates must be provided in the Day/Month/Year format (DD/MM/YYYY).
- The information and names of the importer, exporter, shipment's content, amounts, product description, origin, point of shipping, are consistent across all documents. This help to streamline the entry process.
- Product's sampling is done randomly. It is mainly taken from animal products origin, seeds that the import permit requires it, and when bacteria or fungi are found. Samples are then submitted to laboratory analysis to check the physical, chemical and biological characteristics of the product.
- Prior to granting customs clearance, the SEPA inspector conducts an inspection of the product. The entry of animal products and by-products depends on the food safety conditions of the product itself. It also depends on the exporting country's current animal health and pest's status

For further information, please see the Honduran GAIN reports: Food and Agricultural Import Regulations and Standards (FAIRS) Country Report Number HO1606, and FAIRS Export Certificate Report Number HO1607 at www.fas.usda.gov or contact FAS Tegucigalpa at agtegucigalpa@fas.usda.gov.

III. MARKET SECTOR – STRUCTURE AND TRENDS

A. Entry Strategy

U.S. exporters should keep in mind the relatively small size of the Honduran market and the high elasticity of demand for consumer products when devising marketing strategies. Price is one of the most important elements that influence the receptivity score of most Honduran imports. In many cases, purchasers buy from abroad if they feel that the cost of imports available in the local market is too high. U.S. exporters should carefully analyze both their cost and market approaches when making pricing decisions.

U.S. exporters who offer attractive financing terms on sales to Honduran traders have the best chances of gaining market share. This is particularly true for large-scale projects. It is important to emphasize, however, that international firms must exercise due caution when granting credit to Honduran trading partners. U.S. firms should investigate the creditworthiness and reputation of potential partners before granting credit.

Under CAFTA-DR, tariffs on a wide range of consumer-oriented products for U.S. products were eliminated, and market demand for U.S. products in this sector looks promising. Consumer-oriented products have witnessed significant increases in the past few years.

B. Food Retail Market

Honduras's retail food sector is by far the largest market for imported food. Retail sales of imported consumer-oriented products are conducted mostly by supermarkets, mini-markets, and convenience stores. The supermarket retailing industry is growing rapidly. Supermarkets have opened stores in various medium and large urban locations and most populated cities in the country. Most of the regularly employed population takes advantage of promotions and buys their food at these supermarkets. Many supermarket chains are also expanding, remodeling, and modernizing.

Easter, besides being a religious holiday, is also "vacation" time for the vast majority of Hondurans. This vacation period begins well before and extends beyond the two-day holiday. Christmas gifts baskets are also increasingly popular. In recent years, it has become common to include a high percentage of U.S. products in these baskets. Most commonly included are traditional favorites such as candy, nuts, whiskey, and wines. Easter, Christmas, and Mother's Day are the main peaks for retail sales. By law, in June and December of every year, the government and private sector must provide a bonus to their employees. This bonus is equivalent to a month's salary. Many families make special purchases or buy high quality products at this time.

Various marketing approaches could be developed for the different sectors. It is always important to appoint a local distributor in Honduras who can provide a good market presence. However, many U.S.

suppliers are discouraged by small initial volumes, and do not provide the needed support. U.S. exporters looking to establish and maintain a share of the market should be willing to go the extra mile in developing sales from the ground up and servicing their growing markets. They should work with their customers to satisfy local manufacturing and expiration date requirements and provide their customers with competitive pricing, credit alternatives, catalogs, and samples to test the market. They should also be willing to consider sharing advertising costs for launching new brands. Moreover, they should also be willing to provide technical and sales support, as well as training in various areas such as category management, merchandising, and product handling. There are franchises owned by the same company, which make it easier to approach a wide market.

C. Hotel, Restaurant and Institutional Sector

The tourism industry in Honduras has experienced substantial growth supported by the interest of the Government of Honduras (GOH) and the private sector in developing the industry. Whether for interest of cultural and historic attractions, sporting activities or just relaxation; tourism plays a significant role in nearly all of the Central American countries economies, something which has stimulated growth in the hotel and restaurant industries. U.S food products geared toward the hotel, restaurant, and institutional (HRI) sector are therefore increasing in demand for high quality products.

The hotel industry is rapidly expanding into urban and rural tourism. Among the new projects are those with bungalow-type resorts, ecological type hotels and resorts, apartment-hotels, cabins, hostels, and inns. Convention traffic is also increasing, and the restaurant industry is growing at an even faster rate. Many high-end restaurants, fast-food chains, and franchises are opening due to attractive incentives. Honduras has the largest number of U.S. fast food and casual dining franchises in Central America with more than 300 establishments in two mayor cities. The increase of modern shopping malls and commercial centers has prompted the establishment of an increasing number of restaurants as well.

The U.S. franchises are in need of raw materials, and the local market cannot always fulfill their needs. Also, some of the franchise agreements require U.S. raw materials as part of the contract. The following U.S. franchises and casual dining establishment operate in Honduras:

Antonino's Pizza	Denny's	Pretzels
America's Favorite Chicken	Domino's Pizza	PriceSmart
Applebee's	Dunkin' Donuts	Quiznos
Auntie Anne's	Hilton Princess Hotels	Ruby Tuesday
Burger King	Holiday Inn	Subway
Baskin-Robbins	Johnny Rockets	Tony Roma's
Bojangles	Kentucky Fried Chicken	T.G.I. Friday's
Cinnabon	Little Caesar's Pizza	Wendy's
Circle K	McDonald's	Marriott Hotel
Chester's	Pizza Inn	McDonald's
Chili's Grill & Bar	Pizza Hut	Uno Chicago Grill
Church's Chicken	Popeye's	Start Mart

Honduras is also carrying out projects to enhance tourism which will provide opportunities for U.S.

food products in a high quality resort sector. The Tela Bay project is a major priority in the country's tourism development strategy. Tela is within driving distance from San Pedro Sula and La Ceiba, two of three largest cities. The property covers 312 hectares of land with beach, forest, and lagoon access. It is majority owned by the Honduran Institute of Tourism, but the Honduran private sector has also made large investments in the project. The physical, social, and cultural characteristics of the zone, give the Tela Bay project everything it needs to become a sustainable tourism destination where profitability and nature are well balanced. The project already has an international hotel with an eighteen-hole signature championship golf course (PGA grade). The total area of the Tela Bay project is: 250 rooms four-star hotel, 150 rooms international five-star hotel, and real estate offerings consisting of 437 residential units. Additional amenities include a retail village, an equestrian club, and private beach clubs. Areas have also been set aside for recreational activities, administration, and public services.

D. Food Processing Sector

The total market for food processing in Honduras has increased steadily over the past few years and further increases are expected in the years to come. The United States continues to be the largest supplier of food processing ingredients enjoying a high level of acceptance and reputation for high quality products for human and animal consumption.

Honduran exporters are pursuing expansion plans to increase production and improve the quality of their exports, particularly non-traditional agricultural products such as melons, watermelons, oriental vegetables, okra, winter vegetables, shrimp, jalapeno peppers, and flowers. With CAFTA-DR, producers are looking forward for opportunities to export new products to the U.S. market. Every day, more and more companies are offering processed products such as tortillas, processed wheat, soy or oats, and dehydrated fruits and vegetables.

Central American Customs Union (CACU) members agreed that for products produced or processed in their countries, when a product obtains a Sanitary Registration Number (SRN) in a CACU country, it does not need to be registered in another. Products produced in the United States are not eligible for the registration exemption. However, it is important to note that the origin of the product is considered to be a CACU country if the product is processed in a CACU country, even if the raw material is not from a CACU member country.

IV. BEST CONSUMER ORIENTED PRODUCTS PROSPECTS

The following is a list of product categories with the best export potential for U.S. suppliers based on recent export performance, relative ease of entry, and developing trends.

Product Category	2015 Exports (US\$ in millions)	Import Tariff Rate	Key Constraints Over Market Development	Market Attractiveness from USA
Pork and Pork Products	43.8	Pork Carcass, ham, bacon and pork offal pay 9% tariff under CAFTA-DR	Competition from Nicaragua and local production in	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consumers have strong preferences for U.S. products.

		and 0% Value added tax. Specialized cuts for pork products pay 9% tariff under CAFTA-DR and 15% Value added tax.	a lesser scale.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rapidly developing retail & HRI sector.
Prepared Food	42.2	Prepared foods pay 0% tariff under CAFTA-DR and 15% Value added tax.	Competition from Guatemala, El Salvador and Costa Rica	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consumers have strong preferences for U.S. products. • Rapidly developing retail & HRI sector.
Dairy Products	24.3	Under CAFTA-DR Tariff Rate Quotas have zero in-quota percent tariff for Milk Powder, Butter, Cheese, Ice Cream, Butter and Other Dairy Products. Outside the Quotas all dairy products pay 13.5 % tariff Under CAFTA-DR and 0% to 15% depending on the product type for Value added tax.	Competition from New Zealand, Costa Rica, Australia, Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consumers have strong preferences for U.S. products. • Rapidly developing retail & HRI sector.
Poultry Meat and Products	20.9	Under Quota imports, whole chickens, chicken breasts and wings pay 0% tariff under CAFTA-DR and 0% Value added	Competition from local production and Costa Rica.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consumers have strong preferences for U.S. products. • Rapidly

		tax; MDM pay 0% tariff under CAFTA-DR and 15% value added tax.		developing retail & HRI sector.
Fresh Fruits	13.5	Almost all U.S. fresh fruit products pay 0% tariff under CAFTA-DR and 15% Value added tax.	Competition from Chile, Mexico, Guatemala, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Spain and Peru.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consumers have strong preferences for U.S. products. • Rapidly developing retail & HRI sector.
Condiments and Sauces	12.0	<p>Condiments and spices pay 0% tariff under CAFTA-DR and 15% Value added tax;</p> <p>Sauces pay 0% tariff under CAFTA-DR and 15% Value added tax.</p>	Competition from local production, Guatemala, El Salvador and Costa Rica	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consumers have strong preferences for U.S. products.
Snack Foods NESOI	9.3	Snack foods pay 0% tariff under CAFTA-DR and 15% Value added tax.	Competition from Guatemala, El Salvador and Mexico	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consumers have strong preferences for U.S. products.
Chocolate & Cocoa Products	9.1	Chocolate & Cocoa Products pay between 1.2% and 4% tariff under CAFTA-DR and between 0% to 15% Value added tax depending on the product.	Competition from Switzerland and Guatemala	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consumers have strong preferences for U.S. products.

Processed Vegetables	9.0	Process vegetables pay 0% tariff under CAFTA-DR and 15% Value added tax.	Competition from Costa Rica, Guatemala, Chile, El Salvador and México	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consumers have strong preferences for U.S. products. • Rapidly developing retail & HRI sector.
Wine and Beer	7.2	<p>Wines pay 0% under CAFTA-DR plus 18% Value added tax;</p> <p>Beer pay 4% tariff under CAFTA-DR and 18% Value added tax.</p>	<p>Competition from Chile, Argentina, Spain and Italy for Wine.</p> <p>Beer competition from Mexico, El Salvador and Nicaragua.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consumers have strong preferences for U.S. products. • Rapidly developing retail & HRI sector. • Craft beer has become popular and consumers are willing to pay high prices.

Sources: BICO, U.S. Census Bureau Trade Data, United Nations Commodity Trade Statistics
 Import Tariff Rate: Customs and Tax Directorate (DEI) website:
<http://sarahweb.dei.gob.hn/SarahWeb/default.aspx>

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If you have any questions regarding this report or need assistance exporting to Honduras, please contact the USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) at the following addresses:

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