

U.S.-Japan Trade Agreement

Cheese



Overview: In 2023, the United States exported over \$202 million of cheese products to Japan, making Japan the #3 overseas market for U.S. cheese. Japan is a major importer of U.S. hard cheeses such as cheddar as well as cream cheese and grated/powdered natural cheese. The United States accounted for 16 percent of Japan's total cheese imports. The years below correspond to Japan's fiscal year beginning April 1.

| Product Name Japan Customs HS Code | Base Rate | Year 6 (2024) | Year 7 (2025) | Year 8 (2026) | Final Tariff (Year) | 2023 Imports from U.S. |
|--|-----------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|
| Hard cheese (e.g. Cheddar, Gouda, Monterey Jack) 040690090 | 29.8% | 16.7% | 14.9% | 13.0% | Free (2033) | \$121,496,313 |
| Fresh cheese (shredded) 040610020 | 22.4% | 12.6% | 11.2% | 9.8% | Free (2033) | \$30,577,801 |
| Cream cheese (less than 45% fat) excl. TRQ intended to processed cheese 040610090 | 29.8% | 16.7% | 14.9% | 13.0% | Free (2033) | \$25,224,765 |
| Cream cheese (45% fat or more) exc. TRQ intended to processed cheese 040610090 | 29.8% | 26.8% | 26.8% | 26.8% | 26.8 % (2019) | |
| Grated or powdered natural cheese 040620200 | 26.3% | 14.7% | 13.1% | 11.5% | Free (2033) | \$23,863,764 |
| Grated or powdered processed cheese 040620100 | 40% | 22.5% | 20.0% | 17.5% | Free (2033) | \$576,129 |
| Blue veined cheese excl. TRQ intended to processed cheese 040640090 | 29.8 % | 20.3% | 18.9% | 17.6% | 14.9 % (2028) | \$26,732 |

Country Specific Quota: Japan created a country specific quota for U.S. processed cheese (not grated or powdered) which started at 105 metric tons (MT) and grows to 150 MT over 10 years. In-quota tariffs immediately dropped from 40 percent to 32.7 percent, gradually phasing to zero by 2028.

| HS Code 040630000 | Out of Quota | Year 1 (2019) | Year 2 (2020) | Year 3 (2021) | Year 4 (2022) | Year 5 (2023) | Year 6 (2024) | Year 7 (2025) | Year 8 (2026) | Year 9 (2027) | Year 10 (2028) |
|----------------------|--------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| CSQ (MT) | -- | 105 | 110 | 115 | 120 | 125 | 130 | 135 | 140 | 145 | 150 |
| Tariff | 40% | 32.7% | 29.0% | 25.4% | 21.8% | 18.1% | 14.5% | 10.9% | 7.2% | 3.6% | 0.0% |

Market Considerations: Nearly 90 percent of cheese consumed in Japan is imported. Cheese consumption has grown continuously since 2013. Consumption has traditionally focused on domestically produced processed cheese products which use imported natural cheese as ingredients. Popular processed products include sliced cheese, cheese sticks, and bite-sized cheese wedges. Increasing popularity of Western cuisine in recent years has boosted retail consumption of fresh cheeses including mozzarella, camembert, and cream cheese. Certain cheese terms are restricted for use under Japan's agreement with the European Union. These terms include feta, fontina, asiago, and gorgonzola. Other generic terms such as cheddar, mozzarella, camembert, and gouda are available for general use. The full list of restricted terms is available on the Japanese government's [website](#).

Additional Resources: Further information is available at www.usdajapan.org. For additional questions, please contact the USDA Agricultural Trade Office at atotokyo@usda.gov, Tel: 81-3-3224-5115.