

USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

GAIN Report

Global Agricultural Information Network

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Japan Tree Nuts Market Overview

Report Categories:

Market Development Reports

Product Brief

Tree Nuts

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Report Highlights:

In recent years, Japanese consumers have become more health-conscious and receptive to the benefits for health and beauty of both almonds and walnuts. The key market sectors for tree nuts are bakery and retail. Consumption of nuts heavily relies on imports, led by almonds, which reached a record high in 2018 of 35,960 tons (\$252.8 million). Walnut imports totaled 18,796 tons (\$168.6 million). Both almonds and walnuts are supplied almost exclusively by the United States. Recent food trends support consumption of “guilt-free” foods or sweets, meaning healthy foods that taste good, and products containing tree nuts often have that image in Japan.

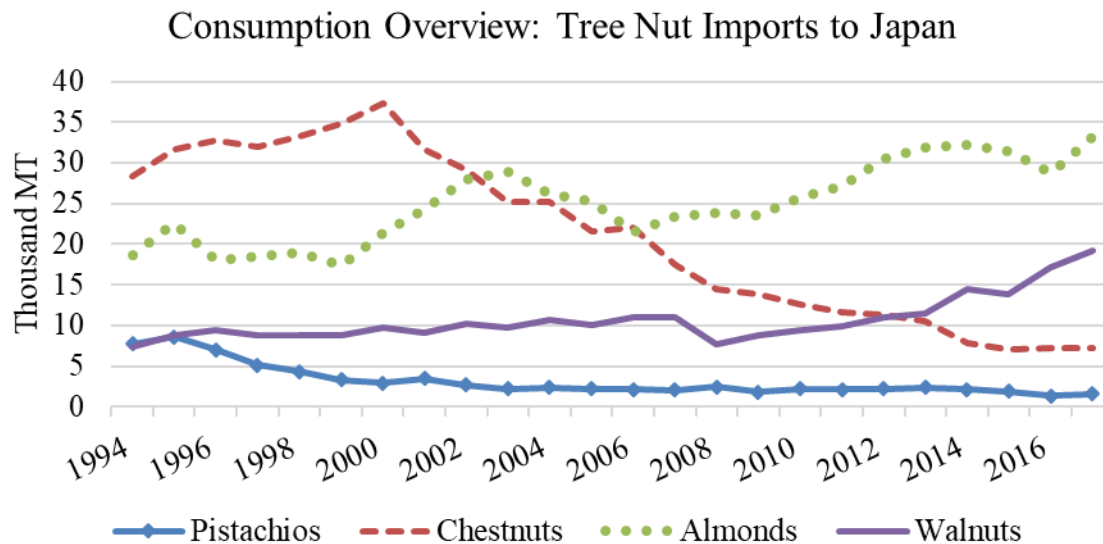
General Information:

Historically, walnuts and chestnuts were grown wild or cultivated on a very small scale for local consumption. Since Japan started importing nuts in the 1950's, nuts such as almonds and mixed nuts have been used as a snack to eat with alcoholic drinks or as ingredients for cookies and chocolates. With the exception of certain walnut production areas, only in recent years have nuts been used for cooking. The Japan Nuts Association was established in 1993, with seventy-three importers and distributors.

Market Trends:

Since Japan has almost no production of nuts, except a very limited production of walnuts (approximately one hundred seventy tons per year), the consumption of nuts heavily relies on imports. The market had been very limited, but stable, because nuts were mostly used as ingredients for bakery and confectionary industry and the retail price for nuts was relatively higher.

Over the past decade, consumption of almonds and walnuts has gradually increased, and imports reached 35,960 tons (a record high) and 18,796 tons, respectively. Meanwhile, Chestnuts and pistachios have seen dramatic declines in import volumes over the past twenty years.



Source: Global Trade Atlas

The key market sectors for tree nuts are bakery (fifty-five percent) and retail (thirty-three percent). For confectionary and baking industry, the following processed nut items have been most widely used:

- **Walnuts:** 1) Raw shelled light-color medium pieces, 2) Raw or roasted shelled light-color small pieces
- **Almonds:** 1) Blanched powder, 2) whole, 3) Roasted cuts, 4) Sliced
- **Pistachios:** 1) In-shell, 2) Raw shelled, 3) Praline rolled into paste, 4) Cuts (for topping)

In the baking sector, walnuts are most the most frequently utilized tree nut; in a variety of bread items and Japanese sweets. In the retail sector, nuts in a 40-55g package or 100g package are popular at convenience stores and supermarkets, and 200g or 500g package are popular at specialty stores, and internet shops. At the retail stores, nuts are placed on the shelf for the baking ingredients and/or the shelf for the snacks. Salted mixed nuts for snacking or for eating with alcohol drinks are traditionally and still popular in the retail sector, however, unsalted straight nuts are gaining in popularity due to the proliferation of information on the health benefits and versatility in usage for each nut. Snack nuts mixed with dry fruits, i.e. trail mix, are still not common in the Japanese market.

In recent years, Japanese consumers have become more health-conscious and the nutritional benefits for health and beauty of both almonds and walnuts have been reported continuously by major television stations as well as on internet and social media sites. The health message is the key to promoting nuts to Japanese consumers. Health-related message include key words like *omega-3*, *anti-oxydant*, *vitamin E*, *vitamin B*, *minerals*, *oleic acid*, *anti-aging*, *reducing cholesterol*, *zero cholesterol*, *healthy blood vessels*, *healthy brain*, *healthy skin*, etc. Almonds lead in the healthy-snacking trends in the snack manufacturing sector.

Recent food trends include increasing popularity of “guilt-free” foods or sweets; meaning healthy foods that taste good. These often include low-carb, gluten-free, low-sugar, low-fat, no-additives, and no-trans-fatty acids products. Nuts, and sweets using nuts, are often cited as the top of the group of “guilt-free” foods or “guilt-free” sweets, as well as dry fruits.

Imports:

Each type of nut is imported mainly from a sole exporter because of specific production conditions such as climate, soil, and ability for mass production and quality control. That dependence can cause unstable supplies and prices; and Japanese importers are seeking a wider variety of potential suppliers to fulfill market demand. The United States dominates as supplier of almonds, walnuts, and pistachios, and ships pecans in lesser quantities. Australia supplies the majority of macadamia nuts; chestnuts are imported primarily from China and Korea; while Turkey is the largest supplier of hazelnuts. Cashews and coconuts are sourced mostly from other countries.

Japan’s free trade agreement with the European Union (EU) and the Comprehensive and Progressive Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) will increase market competition for U.S. nut exports to Japan. In 2017, Japan imported \$557 million in fresh and dried nuts (excluding processed such as roasted), of which 70.7 percent (approximately \$394 million) was from the United States. For more information, read GAIN report [JA8054](#).

<p style="text-align: center;">Commodity: 080212, Almonds, Fresh Or Dried, Shelled (Value = Million USD, Quantity = Tons)</p>
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Partner Country	2016		2017		2018	
	Value	Quantity	Value	Quantity	Value	Quantity
World	238.6	28,647	222.0	33,134	252.8	35,960
- United States	232.4	28,025	214.3	32,231	243.7	34,808
- Others	2.7	623	3.9	904	9.1	1,152
Commodity: 080232, Walnuts, Fresh Or Dried, Shelled						
Partner Country	2016		2017		2018	
	Value	Quantity	Value	Quantity	Value	Quantity
World	117.2	17,151	146.8	19,179	168.6	18,796
- United States	112.5	16,612	139.8	18,397	161.9	18,082
- Others	4.7	538	7.0	781	6.7	714

Source: Global Trade Atlas

Major Tree Nuts Importers, Processors and Distributors in Japan

Japan is a very competitive market, and buyers in the food and beverage industry are inundated with meeting requests. Therefore, they often do not respond to “cold calls” or requests for meetings with individual companies. Instead, they prefer to find new products at large trade shows, or specially targeted trade showcases, where they can look at many products at once. Therefore, the best way to find buyers is to participate in one of the food related trade shows or showcases in Japan.

The ATO organizes U.S. pavilions at the Supermarket Trade Show in February and FOODEX Japan in March, and many Japanese buyers are invited to stop by the U.S. pavilion to meet with exhibitors. The ATO also supports exhibitors at the shows by providing a market briefing, business meeting lounge, etc. Please contact the ATOs for more information about trade shows. Recommended trade show USA Pavilions in Japan are as follows:

- Supermarket Trade Show, February 13-15, 2019, Makuhari Messe, Chiba
- FOODEX JAPAN, March 5-8, 2019, Makuhari Messe, Chiba

The Japan Nuts Association represents the interests of wholesalers, processors, and trading firms. For their member list, please visit: http://www.jna-nut.org/?page_id=16

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