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Report Highlights:

As tourists flock back to the Caribbean in larger numbers and island economies regain their footing after being challenged by global inflation, competition, and other headwinds, opportunities for U.S. suppliers are slowly emerging. While hurdles remain present on the horizon, U.S. suppliers are finding resilient Caribbean buyers to be excellent partners on the road to commercial success. In 2024, the United States is set to maintain its position as the top supplier of consumer-oriented agricultural products to the region, capturing approximately 49 percent share of the import market.

FAS Market Fact Sheet

Executive Summary:

The Caribbean is an excellent market for U.S. suppliers. Proximity, close commercial ties with the United States, a large influx of tourists, and a relatively trade-friendly regulatory environment all contribute to the attractiveness of this market.

Consumer-Oriented Agricultural Imports

Practically all foods must be imported, as domestic production is quite limited. Total imports of consumer-oriented agricultural products totaled \$3.08 billion in 2023, with the United States capturing 49 percent of the market.

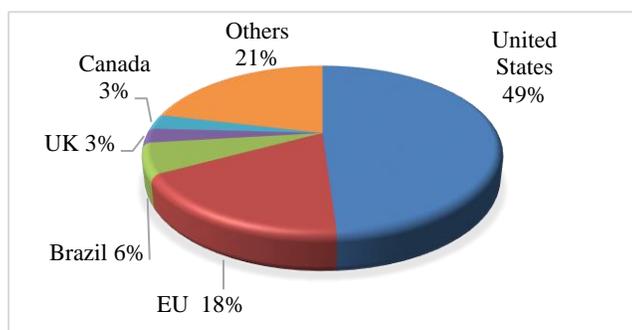


Chart 1: Top Exporting Countries to the Caribbean Basin

Food Retail Industry:

Total grocery retail sales (excl. sales tax) are estimated at \$10.28 billion in 2023. Approximately 82 percent of imported foods and beverages are channeled through the retail sector. This sector includes traditional grocery stores to more modern, upscale supermarkets.

Food Processing Industry:

Given very limited agricultural activity, food processing is also minimal in most countries; except in Trinidad and Tobago, where intermediate and bulk products account for 46 percent and 34 percent of the region's total imports, respectively.

Food Service Industry:

Tourism is a key factor in generating demand for U.S. products in the food service sector. Sales reached \$2.19 billion in 2023, an increase of 14 percent from the previous year. The post-pandemic recovery has spurred the opening of new hotels and restaurants paving the way for future growth opportunities.

Quick Facts CY 2023

Imports of Consumer-Oriented Products

U.S. \$3.08 \$billion

Top 10 Growth Products

- | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1.Poultry Meat Products | 2.Bakery, Cereal & Pasta |
| 3.Dairy Products | 4.Beef & Beef products |
| 5.Non-Alcoholic Bev | 6.Fresh Fruits |
| 7.Food Preparations | 8.Fresh Vegetables |
| 9.Eggs & Products | 10.Pork & Pork products |

Food Industry by Channels (USD billion) 2023

Retail Food Industry	\$ 10.28
Food Service-HRI	\$ 2.19
Food and Agriculture Exports	\$ 3.89

Top 10 Host Country Retailers

Massy Stores, EcoMax, Leader Price, Super Value, Carrefour, Market Place, Rite Way Food Market, Graceway Supermarket, Price Smart and Tru Valu Supermarket.

GDP/Population

Population: 4.96 million (December 2023 estimate)
 GDP: \$ 658 million (Dominica, 2023 est.) – \$28.14 billion (Trinidad and Tobago, 2023 est.)
 GDP per capita (*USD*): Bermuda \$118,774, Guyana \$84,140, Aruba \$54,720, Trinidad and Tobago \$32,680, Dominica \$15,280

Sources: Trade Data Monitor, Euromonitor Intl., International Monetary Fund, World Bank,

Strengths/Weaknesses/Opportunities/Threats

<i>Strengths</i>	<i>Weaknesses</i>
-Proximity; well-established relationships between U.S. suppliers and Caribbean buyers.	- The limited purchasing power of local consumers constrains demand for higher-priced items.
<i>Opportunities</i>	<i>Threats</i>
-As consumers grapple with food inflation, moderately priced private label products are gaining in popularity.	- Food security concerns prevail. The region is looking to substitute imports with local production.

Section I: Market Overview

For purposes of this report, the terms “Caribbean” and “Caribbean Basin” refer to the 25 markets¹ covered by the Caribbean Basin Agricultural Trade Office (CBATO), with the exception of Cuba.

The Caribbean Basin is a large and highly fragmented region of the Americas. It is a mix of independent states, overseas departments or dependencies of European countries, and islands that are part of a European kingdom. The region has 4.96 million inhabitants, of which two thirds are concentrated in five markets: Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, Guadeloupe, Martinique, and The Bahamas. The population is incredibly diverse and is made up of descendants from native tribes that inhabited the region and people of African, European, Indian, and Middle Eastern descent, among others.

Gross Domestic Product (GDP) ranges from \$658 million in Dominica to \$28.14 billion in Trinidad and Tobago and GDP per capita ranges from \$15,280 in Dominica to \$118,774 in Bermuda. With approximately 9.2 million stopover tourists and over 17 million cruise ship passengers visiting the region in 2023, tourism is the main economic driver for the vast majority of Caribbean markets. Trinidad and Tobago and Guyana are the primary exceptions, as their economies are largely based on oil and gas production. According to the IMF, in 2024 Guyana's GDP is projected to grow by 33.9 percent in real terms, owing largely to growth in its oil industry. This would mark Guyana's fifth consecutive year of growth above 20 percent.

Real GDP growth of tourism-dependent Caribbean countries increased 4.4 percent in 2023 and the economy is returning to an average growth rate in 2024, except Guyana's which economy continued to expand rapidly. According to the International Monetary Fund, GDP growth was 38.4 percent in 2023, making it one of the world's fastest-growing economies. The development of the oil and gas sector has created new job opportunities, increased government revenue, and increased tourism investments, with approximately fifteen more hotels to be constructed in the upcoming years.

In general, the economy in the region is reliant on foreign investment to support development, particularly in industries like energy, infrastructure, agriculture, and initiatives that can help mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change. However, reliance on foreign investment can vary among different Caribbean countries.

¹The CBATO's region of coverage consists of the following 25 markets: Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Aruba, The Bahamas, Barbados, Bermuda, British Virgin Islands (BVI), Caribbean Netherlands or BES Islands (Bonaire, Sint Eustatius and Saba), Cayman Islands, Curaçao, Dominica, Grenada, Guadeloupe, Guyana, Martinique, Montserrat, Saint Barthélemy, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Martin, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Sint Maarten, Trinidad and Tobago, and Turks and Caicos Islands.

Advantages and Challenges

ADVANTAGES	CHALLENGES
U.S. suppliers are recognized for their consistent level of quality and continuous replenishment.	The market is highly fragmented.
U.S. exporters, in particular South Florida consolidators, service the market well and are better positioned to supply the Caribbean than competitors.	European influence is present in the market because of historical ties and economic dependencies established over time.
The United States has a dominant market share in the vast majority of Caribbean islands (estimated at 49 percent overall).	Some products, particularly meat and poultry, may be restricted in certain markets due to EU or island-specific regulations.
The regulatory environment at present is generally open to U.S. products.	Caribbean buyers often prefer small quantities as they have limited resources and storage space, which can be challenging for some U.S. suppliers.
The United States is the main source of tourists visiting the region, bolstering demand for U.S. products, particularly for popular U.S. comfort foods (i.e., burgers, barbeque, etc.).	Countries are increasingly interested in decreasing food imports, making a push instead for local and regional produced foods.

Section II: Exporter Business Tips

The best way for a U.S. supplier to export to the Caribbean market is to first research potential niches and develop an effective marketing plan. In doing so, suppliers should weigh the advantages and disadvantages of using an importer/wholesaler versus selling directly to customers. Large U.S. suppliers with a dedicated sales force who can travel to the islands periodically to service their customers may find themselves working directly with multiple retail and food service accounts throughout the region. Exporters who cannot do so can find working with an importer/wholesaler in a particular island/country easier. The latter is, in fact, the easiest and preferred method for most U.S. exporters.

Local Business Customs and Trends

In general, Caribbean buyers rely heavily on consolidators, particularly those in South Florida, to ship mixed container loads to their local ports. As a result, a crucial part of doing business with Caribbean importers is building a relationship with a consolidator in South Florida (and in New York/New Jersey for those seeking to export to Bermuda). Since some large resorts and supermarket chains often order larger shipments directly from suppliers, the primary resources for small and medium-sized U.S. suppliers are local importers/wholesalers. These importers/wholesalers will work with prospective U.S.

suppliers to meet local standards and regulations and find the best distribution channel. They are also likely to stay informed of changing regulations and duties on food and beverage products.

A good way to meet with Caribbean importers is to attend key food and beverage trade shows in the United States. Among the shows with a strong presence of Caribbean importers are the National Restaurant Association (NRA) Show in Chicago, the Summer Fancy Food Show in New York City, and the Americas Food and Beverage (AFB) Show in Miami. The CBATO and its partner organizations (e.g., Southern United States Trade Association, Food Export Midwest, Food Export Northeast, U.S. Meat Export Federation, and USA Poultry and Egg Export Council, among others) often lead delegations of Caribbean buyers to these and other trade shows and buying missions. Please contact the CBATO (see Section VI) to connect with Caribbean buyers attending these U.S. trade events.

General Consumer Tastes and Trends

U.S. brands are well recognized and in high demand by Caribbean consumers. Exposure to U.S. food and culture through television, travel, and U.S. food franchises in the region greatly influences local preferences. The reputation of quality, food innovation, and the popularity of American cuisine are additional factors that contribute to U.S. food exports into the region. Furthermore, due to increased access to technology and social media, Caribbean consumers (particularly the younger generations) keep up to date with the latest consumer trends in the United States and worldwide. Price remains a predominant factor in purchasing decisions. Still, if a brand offers new flavors, ingredients, and attributes such as organic, gluten-free, low sugar, and low fat, consumers might be willing to pay a premium price, especially in markets with higher income per capita.

One important development in the market is the growing concern about the rise of obesity and diabetes in the region. According to the International Diabetes Federation's "Diabetes Atlas," the prevalence of diabetes in the Caribbean ranges from 5 percent in Aruba to 18 percent in Barbados (nearly double the world average). Moreover, studies conducted by the University of the West Indies (UWI) indicate that one in three Caribbean children is estimated to be overweight or obese. Some countries are focusing on healthcare programs that promote healthy eating alternatives and follow prescribed nutritional guidelines, creating opportunities for companies to provide more healthy food options such as healthy snacks for schoolchildren.

Section III: Import Food Standards, Regulations and Procedures

In most Caribbean countries, food safety responsibilities fall under the Ministry of Public Health or its equivalent. The Ministry of Agriculture may also play a role in plant and animal products regarding both public health, and plant and animal health. Meat and poultry, dairy products, seafood, and produce typically require import approval and certification of health/country of origin. For example, phytosanitary certificates from the country of origin must accompany imported fresh produce and plants. Health certificates must accompany live animals and animal products. Certain items may be restricted if the government decides they pose a risk to food safety or plant and animal health. It is always

recommended that U.S. exporters verify that their product is eligible for entry into a particular market before shipping.

Most Caribbean countries follow international standards (e.g., Codex Alimentarius standards) and fully accept U.S. standards for food and agricultural products, including the standard U.S. nutritional fact panel. However, U.S. suppliers must be aware that the European Union Food Information to Consumers Regulation may apply to some EU Member State territories in the Caribbean. The French overseas departments of Guadeloupe and Martinique are a case in point, as they require food and beverage products to be labeled in French and to comply with French and EU norms. In general, enforcement of labeling and other product standards is carried out mostly at the port of entry. Still, routine and random checks are also conducted at the retail and wholesale channels. As always, good communication with local importers will help to ensure proper compliance with local food laws.

More information on Caribbean Basin import requirements can be found in the Food and Agricultural Import Regulations and Standards (FAIRS) reports available via the [USDA Global Agriculture Information Network \(GAIN\)](#) for the following countries: Aruba, The Bahamas, Barbados, Bermuda, Cayman Islands, Curacao, Sint Maarten, and Trinidad and Tobago.

Section IV: Market Sector Structure and Trends

The top five import categories for the Caribbean Basin are poultry products, bakery goods, dairy products, non-alcoholic beverage excluding juice, and beef & beef products. These five categories alone represent approximately over one third of all consumer-oriented product imports. With only a few categories, the United States has the leading market share in practically all product categories.

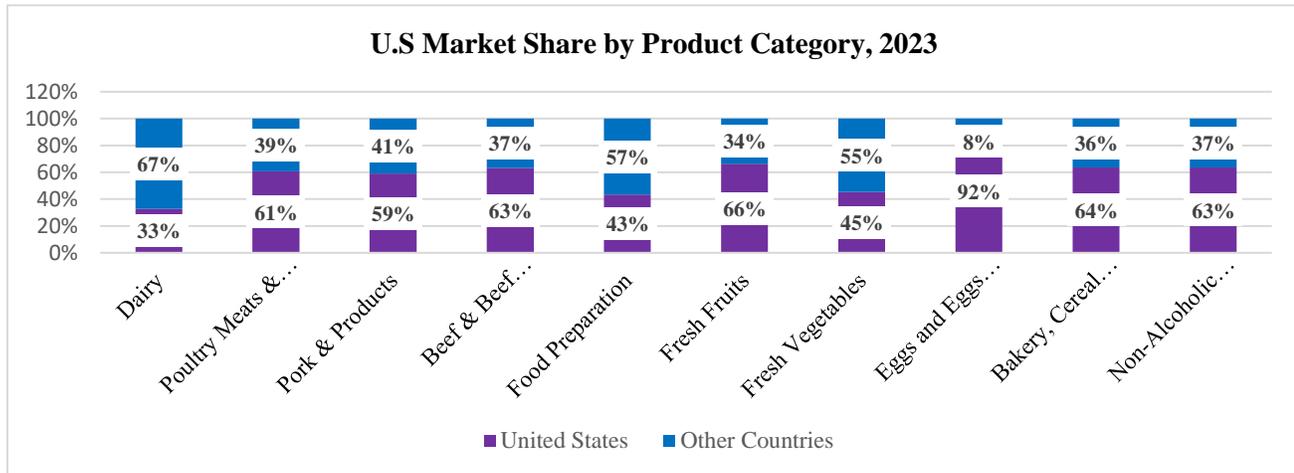


Chart 2: U.S. Market Share by Product Category

A. Retail Sector

An estimated 82 percent of consumer-oriented agricultural imports in the Caribbean are destined for the retail sector. Most of the products stocked on the shelves of Caribbean retail stores are imported. The retail food sector is heterogeneous and dynamic and is composed of modern grocery outlets (hypermarkets, supermarkets, forecourt retailers, discounters, and gas marts) and small, traditional grocery operations.

Caribbean¹ Grocery Retailers by Type, 2023

Type	Number of Outlets	Retail Sales Million \$
Convenience Retailers	1,329	836.90
Supermarkets	615	3,838.50
Hypermarkets	47	1,484.00
Discounters	206	1,110.90
Warehouse Clubs	3	275.60
Food & Drink Specialists	5,098	1,210.60
Small Local Grocers	8,939	1,523.30
TOTAL	16,237	10,279.80

¹ Excludes Turks and Caicos, St. Martin, St. Barts, and BES Islands.

Source: Euromonitor International

According to Euromonitor International, grocery retail sales in the CBATO region totaled an estimated \$10.27 billion in 2023, an increase of 3 percent over 2022. The number of retail outlets in the region slightly decreased in 2022 from 16,254 to 16,237, as modern retail formats such as supermarkets, convenience stores and hypermarkets are gaining market share.

International retail chains in the Caribbean include Massy Stores (Trinidad and Tobago), Price Smart (U.S.), Cost-U-Less (Canada), Save-A-Lot (U.S.), Carrefour (France), Casino (France), and Albert Heijn Zealandia (Netherlands). While these retail outlets do quite well, 'mom and pop' stores will continue to supply a large share of consumers' needs for basic supplies. Additional information can be found in Retail Sector reports via the [USDA Global Agriculture Information Network \(GAIN\)](#). Reports are available for: Aruba, Trinidad and Tobago, the Eastern Caribbean, The Bahamas, Cayman Islands, and Bermuda.

A. HRI Food Service Sector

The Caribbean HRI food service sector is estimated to account for roughly 18 percent of consumer-oriented agricultural imports. According to Euromonitor International, the industry is made up of over 7,212 outlets, with full-service restaurants, cafes, and bars accounting for three-quarters of these.

With only 12 percent of all outlets, limited-service restaurants (mainly fast-food chains) account for 54 percent of the sector's total sales, estimated at \$2.19 billion in 2023. The industry is expected to continue growing as tourism expands.

Caribbean¹ Food Service Operators by Type, 2023

Type	Number of Outlets	Food Service Sales \$ Million
Cafes & Bars	880	201
Full-Service Restaurants	3,004	713
Limited-Service Restaurants	893	1,192
Street Stalls & Kiosks	2,435	92
TOTAL	7,212	2,198

¹ Excludes Turks and Caicos, St. Martin, St. Barts & BES Islands.

Source: Euromonitor International

The percentage of Caribbean hotels and restaurants that are independently owned varies from approximately 90 percent in Grenada to 25 percent in The Bahamas (Nassau in particular). This characteristic influences the flow of imports to the island. The independently owned restaurant or hotel will likely source food and beverage products from local importers/wholesalers. In contrast, larger chain restaurants and hotels have both the connections and the economies of scale to make direct imports from U.S. suppliers.

While corporate-owned resorts and hotels continue to expand in the region, independently owned boutique hotels are also thriving, including luxury beachfronts, eco-friendly properties and wellness-focused accommodations. Local independently owned restaurants remain especially popular in countries such as Aruba, Barbados, Bermuda, the Cayman Islands, Sint Maarten/St. Martin, and Turks and Caicos. Some of the world's most acclaimed chefs are working in the Caribbean. These chefs and their restaurants are often a valuable platform for introducing U.S. food and beverage products. However, many chefs are European-trained, and thus, breaking their preference for European products can take time and effort. Also, some other chefs prefer to use locally sourced ingredients to emphasize freshness, stimulate the local economy, embrace seasonality, and preserve Caribbean cuisine. In this regard, some companies and organizations support local farmers and producers by providing them with resources, loans, and education.

Additional information can be found in HRI Food Service Sector reports via the [USDA Global Agriculture Information Network \(GAIN\)](#). Reports are available for: The Caribbean Basin, The Bahamas, Trinidad and Tobago, Turks and Caicos Islands, the Eastern Caribbean, Cayman Islands, Bermuda, Barbados, and Aruba.

Section V: Agricultural and Food Imports

In 2023, the region imported \$3.89 billion in agricultural products around the world, an increase only 2 percent from 2022. The top five markets in the region for U.S. agricultural products are The Bahamas, Trinidad and Tobago, Cayman Islands, Aruba, and Bermuda. Together, the top five markets account for over one-third of all agricultural imports in the region.

Data indicate that the U.S. share of food and beverage exports is highest in markets such as the Turks and Caicos Islands, where the U.S. share accounts for 84 percent; the Cayman Islands, where the U.S. share accounts for 81 percent; and the Bahamas, where the U.S. share accounts for 75 percent. Given limited domestic agricultural output and food processing, consumer-oriented foods top the main categories of agricultural imports with 80.9 percent. The remainder comprises intermediate or semi-processed products (10.5 percent) and bulk commodities (8.6 percent). In the French overseas departments of Guadeloupe and Martinique, where most products are imported from France, some companies are looking to diversify and purchase products in the U.S. due to the supply chain disruption in Europe.

U.S. Exports of Agricultural Products to the Caribbean, 2019-2023

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Product Category	Value \$US				
Bulk Agricultural Total	125,953	141,712	155,741	188,926	166,770
Intermediate Agricultural Total	153,060	145,202	176,051	205,387	193,960
Consumer Oriented Agricultural Total	1,183,322	1,024,048	1,168,667	1,538,029	1,546,611
Poultry Meat & Prods. (ex. eggs)	128,216	111,307	133,236	174,485	166,465
Bakery Goods, Cereals, & Pasta	119,171	110,527	107,730	131,525	144,682
Dairy Products	112,541	97,231	101,926	127,594	126,408
Beef & Beef Products	96,132	71,821	96,086	119,248	126,187
Non-Alcoholic Bev. (ex. Juices)	74,954	64,695	70,610	89,441	101,947
Soup & Other Food Preparations	86,042	84,935	89,217	125,094	96,703
Fresh Fruit	52,414	55,117	64,397	78,148	86,030
Fresh Vegetables	44,300	42,161	47,316	73,141	75,181
Eggs & Products	43,217	44,857	49,941	77,812	74,689
Pork & Pork Products	51,213	44,553	54,334	64,749	68,505
Condiments & Sauces	38,831	36,096	40,585	52,321	60,204
Distilled Spirits	30,776	21,063	27,295	43,237	49,837
Meat Products NESOI	41,926	31,678	31,891	41,484	45,970
Processed Vegetables	33,193	32,323	34,898	45,956	44,349
Wine & Related Products	37,888	22,989	38,093	51,250	40,877
Dog & Cat Food	33,756	32,563	33,650	44,050	39,348
Fruit & Vegetable Juices	30,476	25,121	24,995	37,509	33,630
Chocolate & Cocoa Products	19,278	15,033	16,774	22,123	29,825
Nursery Products & Cut Flowers	21,473	11,979	19,366	20,596	22,647
Beer	18,491	12,475	18,888	40,290	22,200
Processed Fruit	18,418	14,949	17,112	20,044	20,550
Coffee, Roasted and Extracts	10,425	6,999	8,685	13,562	15,508
Tree Nuts	15,351	13,931	16,349	16,762	13,931
Chewing Gum & Candy	11,753	7,608	9,711	10,823	13,490
Mfg. Tobacco	3,594	3,791	5,598	5,653	13,424
Spices	5,646	5,152	6,949	7,842	9,398
Tea	3,846	3,094	3,039	3,290	4,626
Total Agricultural Products	1,462,334	1,310,962	1,500,460	1,932,342	1,907,340

Source: U.S. Census Bureau Trade Data.

Tourism significantly contributes to the region's GDP, economic growth and creates employment opportunities, attracting millions of visitors annually. However, in the last year the economic growth in many Caribbean markets is returning to normal levels after a period of recovery. In commodity-exporting markets such as Guyana, the economy is benefiting from an increased demand and higher energy prices, investments in infrastructure and development projects and expansion of the mining sector. As the economy continues to grow, opportunities for consumer-oriented products also continue to expand. In particular, value products and healthy foods are expected to continue to increase due to the region's efforts to promote healthy eating.

Consumer-oriented products with high levels of potential include poultry meat, bakery goods, cereals and pasta, dairy products, food preparations, beef products, non-alcoholic beverages, fresh fruit, and eggs products. The following charts illustrate some product categories with the most growth potential for U.S. exporters.

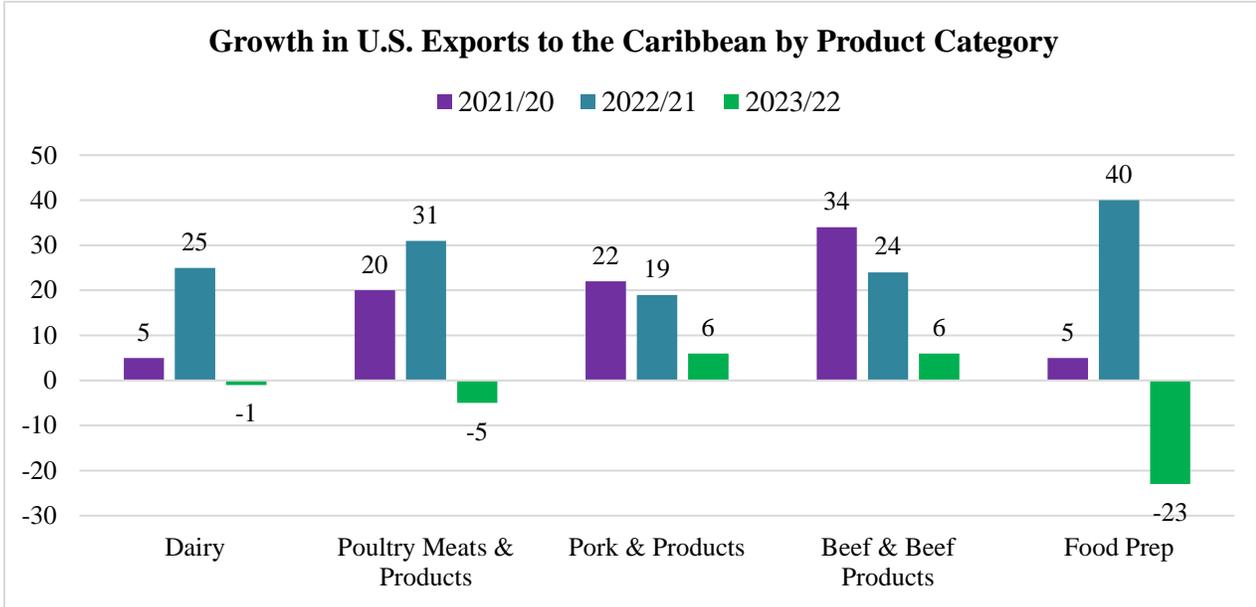


Chart 3: Growth in U.S. Exports to the Caribbean by Product Category

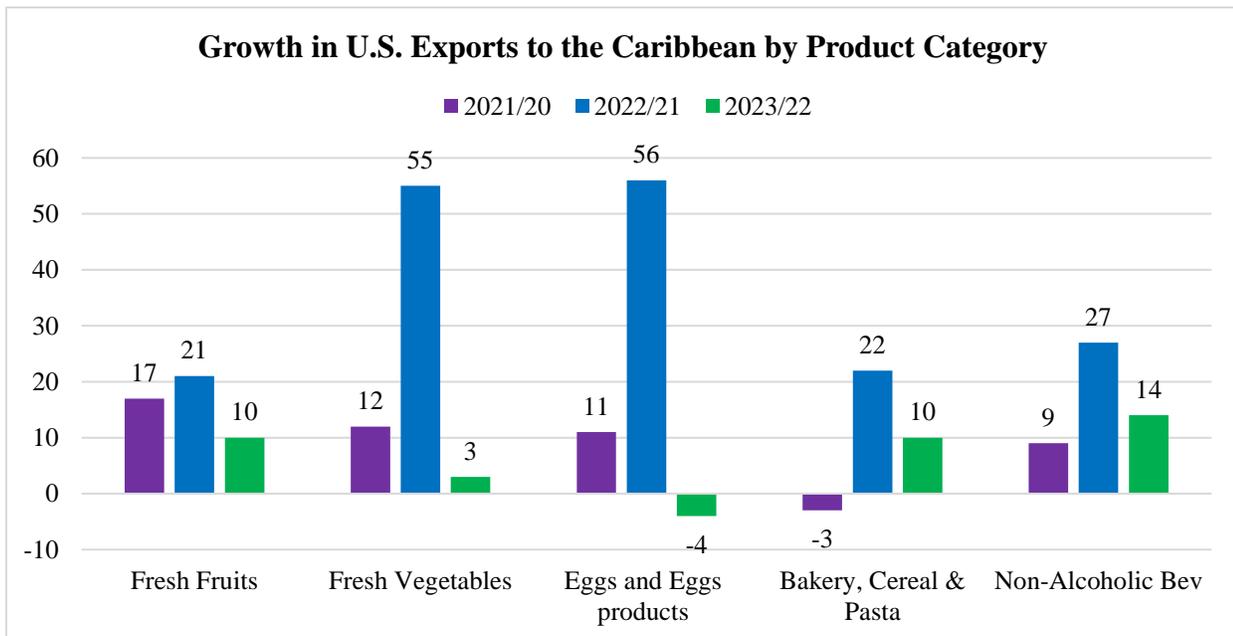


Chart 4: Growth in U.S. Exports to the Caribbean by Product Category

Section VI: Key Contacts and Further Information

If you have questions or comments regarding this report, or need assistance exporting to the Caribbean Basin region, please contact the CBATO in Miami, Florida. Caribbean importer listings are available from the CBATO for use by U.S. exporters of U.S. food and beverage products.

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Attachments:

No Attachments