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**GAIN Report Number:** 

**Singapore** 

**Exporter Guide** 

# 2012 Exporter Guide

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#### **Report Highlights:**

The Singapore economy grew by a more modest rate of 4.9 percent in 2011 due to an overall slowdown in the major drivers of the economy. One major sector, electronics manufacturing experienced a contraction due to a reduction in global demand in calendar year 2011. All other economic sectors including wholesale and retail trade, transport & storage and business services experienced a significant reduction in growth rates.

#### Post:

Singapore

## Executive Summary: Section I. MARKET OVERVIEW

#### **Economic Situation**

Singapore is an independent republic with a land area of 270 square miles and with a population of 5.18 million in a highly urbanized island. Singapore is one of the world's most open market economies and is highly dependent on international trade. The volume of its external trade is about three and a half times its annual Gross Domestic Product. As Singapore has practically no agricultural production on a commercial basis, it is totally dependent on imported foods from a large number of countries worldwide.

The Singapore economy grew by a slower rate of 4.9 percent in calendar year 2011 compared to 14.8 percent growth in 2010. The manufacturing sector experienced a slowdown in its annual growth rate to 7.6% due to lower world demand for electronic products. Other sectors such as Wholesale and Retail trade, Transport & Storage, Information and Communication, Business Services all experienced similar reduced growth rates in 2011.

Singapore's total external trade increased by 8 percent from US\$717 billion in 2010 to US\$774 billion in 2011. In the same calendar year, exports increased by 7.5 % to US\$ 409 billion while imports increased by 0.7% to US\$365 billion.

As a reflection of higher commodity prices and substantial increase in trade volumes with neighboring countries like Malaysia, Indonesia, Australia, China and Thailand, Singapore's global imports of agricultural, fish and forestry products jumped by 24 percent to US\$12.1 billion in 2011.

Over the shorter term horizon, the Singapore economy is anticipated to experience even lower growth performance for calendar year 2012. The Singapore government has provided preliminary forecasts that the Singapore economy will grow at a lower rate of 2-3 per cent for the entire year of 2012.

With one of the highest per capita incomes in Asia, Singapore is the most developed economy within the ASEAN region. The fact that Singapore strategically lies on the cross-roads of major air and sea routes within the Asia Pacific region enhances its traditional role as a major transshipment center for much of the Southeast Asian region and the Indian subcontinent. The above factors also contribute to Singapore's position as a regional food showcase and headquarters for international food and agricultural related companies.

#### The Market for Consumer Oriented Foods

As Singapore is almost entirely dependent on imported foods, it is not surprising that the total value of imported consumer oriented foods exceeded US\$6.1 billion in CY2011. An additional US\$1.1 billion of fish and seafood products were imported in CY 2011.

Not all the imported foods are consumed locally. It is estimated that routinely, about 75% of food imports are re-exported mostly to neighboring countries. Major product categories include dairy products, frozen poultry and poultry parts, fresh fruit and vegetables, red meats, alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages, snack foods and other consumer-oriented products. Growth rate for the consumer oriented foods category averaged about 20 percent per annum over the calendar period 2009-2011. The U.S. market share of the consumer oriented foods category in the 2009-2011 period averaged 8-9 percent per annum.

#### Demography and Socio-economic impact

Like most developed and highly urbanized economies, Singapore's indigenous population growth rates have been falling rapidly in the last decade as a result of the decreasing number of births by Singapore citizens. However, due to the growing influx in the number of foreigners, the number of Singapore residents increased at the annual rate of 2.1 percent in 2011. This factor alone augmented the slow natural growth (estimated at less than one percent per annum) in the number of Singapore citizens. The total population of 5.18 million comprised of 3.79 million citizens and permanent residents and just over 1.39 million foreign workers (and their dependents) on employment passes, work permits or long term social visit passes.

The proportion of elderly residents has increased rapidly over the last ten years. Residents aged 65 years and above comprised about 9 percent of Singapore's resident population. This proportion is expected to increase to over 20 percent by 2050. On the flipside, the youth population (aged 14 years and below) as a percentage of the population declined from 23 percent in 1990 to 16 percent in 2011. On the positive side, the mean years of schooling among resident non students aged 25-39 is 10.2 years. The literacy rate is 91 percent. Sixty six percent of the resident non student population aged 25 years and older possesses Secondary or Higher Qualification. The number of singles has also risen in the country with the fall in the number of persons getting married over the last ten years. The age at which both grooms and brides get married has also risen.

#### Summary of socio-economic impact of the changing demographic structure.

- 1) Slower growth rates in domestic demand.
- 2) Growing personal disposal income due to better-educated workforce.
- 3) Smaller household sizes due to falling marriage and birth rates.
- 4) Demand for food products for the mature age groups growing.
- 5) Growth and diversity in consumer tastes with the greater increase in the number of highly educated and more traveled Singaporeans. The rising numbers of visitor arrivals and foreign workers in the country have also contributed to the wider variety of consumer tastes.
- 6) With the rise in the number of working women and newly arrived single executives, there is a corresponding growth in demand for convenience foods and ready to cook prepared meals.

#### Advantages and Challenges for U.S. Suppliers

Advantages	Challenges			
Fast growing incomes and highly educated population	High costs of entry into major supermarket chains			
Increasing preference for higher quality products	Lower prices of competing products from other countries			
Proliferation of western family-style restaurants and fast food chains	Inadequate knowledge on use of U.S. products			
Large numbers of resident expatriate population familiar with western type foods	High promotional and advertising costs for introducing new products			

#### SECTION II. EXPORTER BUSINESS TIPS

#### **Local Business Practices and Custom**

In the arena of international trade, Singapore business practices tend to follow those in the more developed and highly urbanized economies. The country's laws are patterned after the British legal system. There is considerable reliance on international trading practices and contracts. Letters of credit are normally used for first time transactions and only after a long history of business relationship is established, the terms of payment may be mutually adjusted to an open trading account with payment terms of up to two months. It is not uncommon for buyers to request for samples from first time suppliers. In some cases, U.S. exporters may request that buyers pay for airfreight charges and handling costs of samples if they become prohibitive.

U.S. exporters who are exporting for the first time to the Singapore market would be advised to consider making use of local distributors or at least a local representative to help them guide through the requirements of the Singapore Food regulations and local trading practices.

However, financial and credit arrangements in the domestic economy are very different. With few exceptions, supermarket chains, restaurants and other retail customers expect suppliers to provide credit terms of up to ninety days. There is also an implicit understanding to accept the return of damaged and unsold goods. On the other hand, some small retailers like Mom and Pop stores pay cash on delivery, as their order sizes are very small. Hence, if U.S. exporters decide to carry out their own local distribution, they would have to expect to meet the usual credit terms demanded by local supermarket chains.

#### **General Consumer Tastes and Preferences**

With rising consumer incomes, Singaporeans are prepared to pay for higher quality food products or products that will provide savings in labor and time. Hence, on the supermarket shelves we tend to see an increasing number of prepared and convenience foods. Diced vegetables and seasoned portion-control meats and poultry are in increasing demand as both spouses work.

As almost all Singapore households are of Asian origin, imported foods that are to be used in local cooking have to be able to lend themselves to Asian cuisines. Asian dishes tend to be stir fried, prepared in curries or marinated in chili sauces.

#### **Food Standards and Regulations**

Singapore food laws are delineated in the Food Act and all packaged foods sold in retail outlets have to comply with the allowable ingredients and preservatives listed in the abovementioned Act (see the latest FAIRS Report in the USDA website, www.fas.usda.gov).

Singapore has a very open import regime and all foods, with the exception of alcoholic beverages and tobacco products are imported duty free. There are practically no non-tariff restrictions since there is very little local production and the current government policy is to source food products from all over the world. Customs clearance of imported food products is carried out electronically and the process is completed in less than 48 hours.

#### **Import and Inspection Procedures**

Export health certification is required for the import of meat, poultry products and shellfish products. In most import cases, random inspection and laboratory analysis of meat and poultry products are carried out.

#### SECTION III. MARKET SECTOR STRUCTURE AND TRENDS

**Consumer-oriented Foods and Beverages & Edible Fishery Products** 

Singapore, which has the second highest per capita income in Asia, is one of the most open economies in the world with no tariffs on all food products except on alcoholic beverages. As a result, a wide range of food products from all over the world can be found on supermarket shelves in this compact island nation of 5.18 million people.

The major suppliers of fresh temperate climatic fruit to Singapore are the United States, Australia, New Zealand, European Union, China, South Africa, Argentina and Chile. Suppliers of tropical fruit are neighboring countries of Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand. Singapore households buy mostly fresh leafy green vegetables from Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand and China. On the other hand, most of the imported temperate vegetables originating from Australia, New Zealand, European Union and the United States are supplied to restaurants and larger supermarket stores.

Singapore imports all the meats and poultry it consumes from all over the world. Poultry and pork are the main meat items consumed in Singapore. Freshly slaughtered chicken is obtained mostly by importing live poultry from Malaysia for slaughter in local abattoirs. About half of the chicken requirements are fulfilled through the imports of frozen chicken and chicken parts from Brazil, United States, China and the European Union.

Since April 1999, when all local pig farms ceased production, the only source of imported live pigs (about 250,000 head annually) for slaughter comes from Indonesia. Most of Singapore's pork requirements are fulfilled through the import of chilled pork from Australia and frozen pork from European Union and the United States. Beef, while not as widely consumed as chicken, is sold principally in the supermarkets. Major suppliers of beef include Australia, New Zealand, Argentina and China. The United States is allowed to supply only boneless beef from cattle less than 30 months of age because of BSE concerns.

In the seafood category, Singaporeans consume mostly fresh and frozen finfish caught and sold by neighboring countries, i.e. Malaysia, Indonesia and Burma. Other major suppliers include Taiwan and Japan, India, Australia, Vietnam and China. In 2011, a total value of US\$1.1 billion of seafood was imported from worldwide sources.

Singaporeans are very fond of fresh seafood; especially fin fish, crabs, lobsters and clams. While most of the finfish are purchased in the wet markets for home consumption, Singapore consumers generally go to restaurants for the consumption of crabs and lobsters.

#### **Food Retail Sector**

It is estimated that about 60 percent of the food retail sales of US\$4.84 billion take place in supermarkets, hyper marts and modern mini marts, while the rest are sold in convenience shops, traditional provision stores (Mom & Pop stores), petrol stations and wet market stalls. Traditionally Singaporeans shop for their fresh produce, meats and fish in wet market stalls. Over the last decade however, more and more household are turning to supermarkets for their fresh produce, meats and fish requirements. Generally, importers who represent foreign brands will be responsible for the market development of the brands, advertising and promotion and increasing distribution reach to all retailers.

However, in recent years, some of the large supermarket chains and several up market retailers import western-type products directly for their own outlets. Products directly imported would include frozen prepared meals, juices, jams, confectionery, biscuits, salad dressings, pre-packed deli meats and fresh temperate fruit. Products procured from local importers would include products from the Asian region, dry groceries, tropical fruit, frozen chicken and chicken parts, frozen beef, local sauces and ethnic foods.

Two major supermarket chains dominate the Singapore retail industry, Dairy Farm and NTUC Fairprice supermarket chains. The former targets principally the middle and higher income groups while the latter caters to the mass-market group.

The largest supermarket chain in terms of number of supermarket retail stores is the Dairy Farm Group with 113 supermarket stores, comprising of 53 Cold Storage supermarket retail stores (including 6 premier Market Place stores and one premier store called 360), 60 Shop & Save Stores,. In addition, the group operates 8 Giant Hyper mart stores. A large percentage of products on their shelves comprised mostly western-type products procured from E.U., Australia, New Zealand and the United States. Eight of their outlets are located in upper middle-income residential areas and customers to these outlets are principally expatriates and upper middle-income residents. In addition, the Dairy Farm Group operates the 7-Eleven Convenience Chain of 530 stores and 128 Guardian Pharmacy outlets

The NTUC Fairprice supermarket chain which is the second largest supermarket chain in terms of number of supermarket outlets, has 90 Fairprice supermarkets, 9 Fairprice Finest stores. In addition, it operates 5 Fairprice Hyper marts. In addition, the group has 120 Cheers Convenience Stores and 20 Fairprice Convenience Stores some of which are located in Esso-Mobil Stations. NTUC Fairprice's target audience is principally the middle and lower income groups. Competitive pricing is one of the main factors determining whether a new product should be procured for the Fairprice stores. The Fairprice chain is the most extensive in terms of consumer reach, geographically and across all income segments. Fair price stores are located in almost every large residential population concentration. Importers who require their products to be distributed island-wide and with the focus on the mass market prefer to work with NTUC Fairprice.

NTUC Fairprice supermarket chain procures most of their food products from local importers. However, in recent years, NTUC Fairprice has embarked on extensive house branding of basic essentials like rice, bread, cooking oil, toilet paper, box tissue, and sugar, dish washing liquid and canned fruit.

Besides Cold Storage and NTUC Fairprice supermarkets, there are several independently managed supermarkets like Isetan, Meidi-Ya, Mustafa's, Prime Supermarket, and Sheng Siong. The most recently established supermarket chain, Sheng Siong, which has 25 small and medium sized stores and Prime Supermarket which has 17 outlets are family owned business entities which originated from small single grocery outlets to their current sizes today. Both Sheng Siong and Prime are very price competitive as they procure most of their products from China and other neighboring low cost Asian supplier countries. Customers of both supermarket chains come mostly from the lower middle-income groups. The rest of the above mentioned supermarkets are independently operated supermarket stores with only one outlet each. Isetan and Meidi-Ya target principally the upper middle-income groups and the Japanese community in Singapore.

Outside the supermarket category, there are more than 23,000 mini-marts, convenience stores and traditional provision shops located in all residential housing estates all over the island. As these shops tend to be very small and, in most cases, no more than 600 square feet in retailing area, products tend to be limited to the very basic household items and to a small number of confectionery items and snack foods. Few of the shops in this category do not sell frozen meats and prepared meals nor is fresh produce retailed in this category.

#### **Food Service Sector**

It is estimated that Singaporeans spend about US\$5 billion annually eating out. Restaurants as a group account for 37 percent, while fast food outlets account for 13 percent of the total revenue in the food & beverage services industry. Food caterers take up a 12 percent share of the food and beverage industry. The Others Category consisting of cafes, coffee houses, food courts, coffee shops and eating houses take up 38 percent of the total. Since eating out in the numerous cooked food stalls located round every corner of major housing residential estates is relatively inexpensive, most Singaporeans eat out at least once a day. As most households have working wives, Singapore families find it more convenient and, in most cases, less expensive to eat out. It is not uncommon each evening to see families walk to the nearest neighborhood cooked-food stall to have their dinner.

According to government statistics, there are more than 5,500 cooked food stalls in the whole island. Besides these cooked-food stalls, fast food chains like McDonalds, Kentucky Fried Chicken, Burger King, Pizza Hut are located in large shopping complexes all over the island.

The food service industry continued to show improvement in 2011. Restaurant sales reported an increase of 7 percent for 2011 due to the greater influx of tourists and business arrivals to the republic nation. It is reported that the food service industry is reverting back to better quality but higher priced foods as customers resume their original preference for quality food ingredients.

Food service companies in Singapore are widening their distribution network to other countries in the Asian region to achieve economies of scale in operation. As individual restaurant requirements are small, Singapore food service companies provide an alternative supply chain to customers who have small but frequent procurement needs for U.S. or western-type products.

It is thus not uncommon to see a number of well-known U.S. brands being transshipped or distributed from Singapore. Traders here are able to provide credit terms to their counterparts in the region or to carry out specific handling, packaging or documentation requirements. Generally products which have a longer shelf life and which do not need refrigeration are more

easily transshipped.

Meat and poultry products, which require halal certification for Muslim consumers in the region, are generally shipped direct to the country of destination. Again, some Singapore traders may be involved in the ordering process as well as in the provision of short-term credit to the local importer in the destination country.

#### **Food Processing Sector**

Singapore's food processing sector is very limited and the major food manufacturers are those in beer, non-alcoholic beverages, snack foods, fish processing and ethnic food activities. As Singapore has no crop or livestock production, practically all food ingredients are imported from a wide range of countries worldwide.

According to the Singapore government statistics, there are more than 300 companies making up Singapore's food processing sector most of which are small-scale operations with output barely sufficient for the local market. These firms manufacture food products ranging from beverages and snack foods to dairy and confectionery goods. With the exception of the beer and soft drinks plants, the scale of production tends to be small and the number of employees for each food-manufacturing establishment tends to be less than 100 each.

The total output of the locally manufactured food, beverage and tobacco sector was valued at around US\$6.6 billion in 2011, out of which it was estimated that over half was re-exported. Products, which are exported, include beer, soft drinks, edible oils, chocolates, processed seafood, milk powder, condensed milk, sauces and spices.

The source of competition varies depending on the nature of the product manufactured. For example, Australia supplies most of the milk products and dairy ingredients while China supplies most of the corn and soybean products. Malaysia supplied nearly 20 percent of the food ingredient market and is the major supplier of live animals for slaughter, edible oils, tropical fruit and vegetables. The U.S. has significant market share in juices, juice concentrates, frozen poultry parts, fresh temperate fruit, nuts, flavorings, spices and leaf tobacco.

#### SECTION IV. BEST HIGH -VALUE PRODUCT PROSPECTS

Product Category	2011 Total Imports US\$ Million	2009- 2011 Ave Annual Growth %)	Key Constraints over Market Development	Market Attractiveness for USA
Snack Foods	341	18	Intense Competition from lower cost suppliers from neighboring ASEAN region, China, EU and Australia	Availability of wide variety of flavors. Quality of U.S. products and packaging.
Fruits & Vegetable Juices	61	12	Lower priced fruit & vegetables juices from Australia, New Zealand & E.U.	Quality and instant brand recognition of leading U.S. brands
Fresh Fruit	413	15	Intense competition from China, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand	U.S. has reputation of being a supplier of quality fresh fruits
Tree Nuts	159	44	Competition from low priced peanuts from China and pistachios	Quality of products from U.S. are consistently maintained

			from Iran	
Fresh Vegetables	366	18	Strong competition from China, Indonesia, Thailand, Australia, New Zealand and EU	U.S. has a reputation for quality products and instant brand recognition
Pet Foods	26	12	The market for pet foods is keenly contested. Australian brands are well established and have a closely geographical advantage	U.S. brands have a high brand recognition and there is a natural reluctance to carry out brand switching for marginal price differences

## SECTION V. KEY CONTACTS AND FURTHER INFORMATION

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Email: agsingapore@usda.gov

Agri-Food & Veterinary Authority of Singapore Ministry of National Development 5 Maxwell Road #03-00 Tower Block MND Complex Singapore 069110

Tel: (65) 6222-1211 Fax: (65) 6220-6068 Website: www.ava.gov.sg

International Enterprise Singapore 230 Victoria Street, Level 10 Bugis Junction Office Tower Singapore 188024

Tel: (65) 6337-6628 Fax: (65) 6337-6898

Website:www.iesingapore.com

Singapore Business Federation

10 Hoe Chiang Road #22-01 Keppel Tower Singapore 089315 Tel: (65) 6827-6828 Fax: (65) 6827-6807

Website: www.sbf.org.sg Email:info@sbf.org.sg

American Chamber of Commerce in Singapore

1, Scotts Road #23-04, Shaw Centre Singapore 228208 Tel: (65) 6235-0077 Fax:(65) 6732-5917

Website: www.amcham.org.sg

Singapore Retailers Association 371 Beach Road #02-04/05 Keypoint Singapore 199597 Tel:(65) 6295-2622 Fax:(65) 6295-2722

Email: info@sra.org.sg Website: www.retail.org.sg APPENDIX I. STATISTICS

## A. Key Trade & Demographic Information

	2011	2011	
Agricultural Imports From All Countries (\$Mil) /U.S. Market Share (%)	12120	7%	
Consumer Food Imports From All Countries (\$Mil) /U.S. Market Share (%)	6086	10%	
Edible Fishery Imports From All Countries (\$Mil) /U.S. Market Share (%)	1093	2%	
Total Population (Millions) /Annual Growth Rate (%)	5.18	1.8	
Urban Population (Millions) / Annual Growth Rate (%)	NA.	N.A.	
Number of Major Metropolitan Areas	1		
Size of the Middle Class (Millions) /Growth Rate (%)	N.A.	N.A.	
Per Capita Gross Domestic Product (U.S. Dollars) / Increase over previous year	50,123	2	
Unemployment Rate (%)	2.2		
Per Household Food Expenditure (U.S. Dollars) Per Annum	8352		
Exchange Rate in 2010 (US\$1 = S\$1.2579)			

TABLE B. CONSUMER FOOD & EDIBLE FISHERY PRODUCTS IMPORTS

Singapore Imports		nports fro						.S. Mark hare (%)	
(In Millions of Dollars)	Imports from U.S.			` ′					
•	2009	2010	2011	2009	20010	2011	2009	2010	2011
CONSUMER-ORIENTED AG TOTAL	4072	4964	6086	347	452	587	9	9	9
Snack Foods (Excluding Nuts)	243	287	341	26	34	32	11	12	8
Breakfast Cereals, Pancake Mix	26	28	32	5	7	8	19	25	25
Red Meats, Fresh/Chilled/Frozen	258	435	503	19	34	41	7	8	8
Red Meats, Prepared & Preserved	117	137	166	12	14	18	10	10	10
Poultry Meat	178	215	270	32	42	64	18	20	23
Dairy Products (Excluding Cheese)	558	796	976	16	30	60	3	4	6
Cheese	54	64	78	3	4	7	6	6	8
Eggs & Products	94	106	127	1	1	2	1	1	2
Fresh Fruit	313	360	413	59	71	83	19	20	20
Fresh Vegetables	269	327	366	13	16	16	5	5	4
Processed Fruit & Vegetable	224	270	311	42	51	60	19	19	19
Fruit & Vegetable Juice	48	53	61	12	11	12	25	21	20
Tree Nuts	78	93	159	7	10	12	9	11	8
Wine & Beer	384	478	615	7	9	12	2	2	2
Nursery Products & Cut Flowers	63	77	93	1	1	2	2	1	2
Pet Foods (dogs & Cat Food)	21	24	26	8	9	8	38	38	31
Other Consumer-Oriented Products	1045	1214	1548	109	132	152	10	11	10
FISH & SEAFOOD PRODUCTS	767	909	1094	13	21	27	2	2	2
Salmon	30	45	50	0	0	0	0	0	0
Surimi	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Crustaceans	225	269	330	4	7	11	2	3	3
Ground fish & Flatfish	36	32	34	0	1	0	0	3	0
Molluscs	80	95	120	3	5	5	4	5	4
Other Fishery Products	395	468	560	4	8	11	1	2	2
AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS TOTAL	6589	8244	10368	506	594	704	8	7	7
AGRICULTURAL, FISH & FORESTRY TOTAL	7810	9717	12121	534	639	745	7	7	6

## TABLE C. TOP 15 SUPPLIERS OF CONSUMER FOODS & EDIBLE FISHERY PRODUCTS

## **Consumer Oriented Agricultural Imports (In US\$ Million)**

Rank	Dauta au Caumtur	United	<b>United States Dollars</b>				
	Partner Country	2009	2010	2011			
1	Malaysia	723	880	997			
2	Australia	477	557	644			
3	United States	374	478	587			
4	China	357	427	470			

5	France	264	350	464
6	New Zealand	255	382	441
7	Indonesia	186	221	322
8	Brazil	268	295	319
9	Thailand	235	245	286
10	Netherlands	96	119	169
11	Madagascar	33	13	112
12	India	58	73	105
13	Japan	75	94	101
14	Germany	63	81	101
15	Italy	52	65	85
	Others	547	647	886
	TOTAL	4,072	4,964	6086

## Imports of Fish & Seafood Products (in US\$ Million)

	Dauta au Country	Bartner Country United State				
Rank	Partner Country	2009	2010	2011		
1	Indonesia	113	113	134		
2	Malaysia	116	130	133		
3	Vietnam	60	76	92		
4	China	46	55	82		
5	Thailand	56	61	69		
6	Australia	41	53	65		
7	Norway	31	46	52		
8	Japan	42	52	51		
9	Taiwan	48	52	44		
10	India	27	32	42		
11	Chile	16	19	31		
12	Uruguay	8	10	30		
13	Spain	11	14	30		
14	United States	13	21	27		
15	New Zealand	15	25	23		
	Others	124	98	188		
	TOTAL	767	909	1093		

**Source: GTIS** 

END OF REPORT