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**Country:** Colombia

**Post:** Bogota

**Report Category:** Retail Foods

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**Report Highlights:**

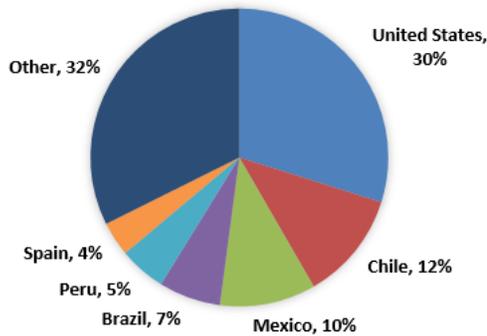
Colombia is the main market for U.S. consumer-oriented products in South America. In 2022, U.S. consumer-oriented exports to Colombia reached a record \$877 million. Although the Colombian retail sector continued its positive performance in 2022 due to growing household consumption, the sector's future growth is uncertain due to increasing inflation and interest rates. Post expects that Colombian consumer expenditures will decline, affecting economic performance.

**Market Fact Sheet: Colombia**

**Executive Summary:** Colombia is the leading destination for U.S. agricultural exports in South America, followed by Chile and Peru. In 2022, U.S. agricultural exports to Colombia were valued at \$3.8 billion.

**Imports of Consumer-Oriented Products:** In 2022, Colombian imports of consumer-oriented products from all suppliers increased 20 percent to \$2.8 billion due to economic growth. In 2022, Colombian imports from the United States grew 7.7 percent to \$849 million, followed by Chile (\$335 million) and Mexico (\$297 million). Consumer-oriented products account for 26 percent of U.S. food and agricultural exports to Colombia.

**Top Sources of 2022 Colombian Imports of Consumer-Oriented Products**



Source: Trade Data Monitor

**Food Processing Industry:** Colombia is a net importer of many food ingredients. There is growing domestic demand for healthier confectionary products. The Colombian fats and oils sector imports unrefined soybean oil and other oil seeds to meet industrial demand. The milling, bakery, and starches sectors have benefited from innovation in flavors and healthier ingredients. [Food Processing Industry GAIN report](#)

**Food Retail Industry:** Although hard discounters' market share decreased in 2022 (from 33 to 24 percent) due to the bankruptcy of Justo & Bueno, it is expected to recover due to new market entrants. E-commerce continues consolidating thanks to rapid digital adoption among Colombians.

**Food Service Industry:** In 2022, the sector benefited from tax exemptions and experienced a recovery after low sales in 2020 and 2021. However, these benefits ended, and higher taxes and inflation rates are expected to impact food service sales. [Food Service Industry GAIN Report](#)

**Population:** 51.6 million (2022)

**GDP:** \$342.92 billion (2022)

**GDP per capita:** \$6,644 (2022)

**Top 10 Main Consumer-Oriented Products Imported by Colombia from the World (millions of dollars):**

Description	2021	2022	Change
Dairy products	\$283	\$397	40%
Pork & pork products	\$301	\$314	4%
Soup & food preparations	\$257	\$302	18%
Distilled spirits	\$158	\$201	27%
Processed vegetables	\$140	\$198	42%
Fresh fruit	\$168	\$180	7%
Bakery goods, cereals, pasta	\$115	\$148	28%
Tobacco	\$106	\$121	13%
Dog & cat food	\$89	\$118	32%
Poultry meat and products (exc. Eggs)	\$122	\$110	-10%

Source: Trade Data Monitor

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Growing demand for consumer-oriented products</li> <li>• Diverse retail market</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deficient infrastructure</li> <li>• Political and economic uncertainty</li> </ul>
Opportunities	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Growing middle class</li> <li>• Decentralized country</li> <li>• Four ports</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technical food regulation compliance</li> <li>• Peso depreciation</li> </ul>

**Top 5 Retailers**

<a href="#">Grupo Exito</a>	<a href="#">Jerónimo Martins (ARA)</a>
<a href="#">Koba Colombia (D1)</a>	<a href="#">Olímpica</a>
<a href="#">Alkosto</a>	

**Sources:** Trade Data Monitor, World Bank, Global Agricultural Trade System, Euromonitor, DANE, IMF, various online sources. For additional information, contact [agbogota@usda.gov](mailto:agbogota@usda.gov)

## SECTION I: MARKET SUMMARY

According to the [Colombian Department of Statistics \(DANE\)](#), Colombia's gross domestic product (GDP) increased 7.5 percent in 2022, while the trade sector increased 10.7 percent. The [Colombian Central Bank \(Banrep\)](#) predicts that Colombia's economic recovery will slow to 1.0 percent GDP growth in 2023 and could continue being revised downward on lower private consumption and investment levels, higher interest and inflation rates, and general uncertainty from the new Colombian administration's recent tax reform and potential changes to labor and pension systems.

Colombia is the third most populous country in Latin America with 51 million inhabitants. Eighty percent of the Colombian population resides in urban areas. Colombia is atypical of Latin America with decentralized urban centers and five cities with over one million residents: Bogota, Medellin, Cali, Barranquilla, and Cartagena. Urbanization is on an upward trajectory, stimulating changes in lifestyles and eating patterns.

In recent years, urban households in Colombia are becoming dual income, resulting in an increased demand for processed food and shopping convenience. In Bogota, the average household was 3.1 members in 2019, and it is expected to be only 2.2 members by 2050. The population is aging as birth rates decrease, and life expectancy increases. Venezuelan immigration is another key demographic trend. The Colombian government estimates that over 2.4 million Venezuelans live in Colombia. They influence the consumption of main food staples such as beans, rice, and corn flour.

Main consumer trends can be summarized as follows:

- Higher brand food product price sensitivity leaves room for private labels. Favorite private label products are milk, vegetable oil, and rice.
- Growing health and environmental awareness translates into opportunities for healthy and sustainable food products.
- Growing interest in plant-based food products has opened a niche market that is on the rise. Although these products are perceived as expensive, 93 percent of Colombians are interested in trying plant-based food products, as they are considered healthier, more nutritious, and environmentally friendly.
- Preference for high-protein and calcium content products has encouraged demand for meat and dairy products.

The [Food Service GAIN Report](#) and the [Food Processing Ingredients GAIN Report](#) provide data and analysis on Colombian food trends.

**Table 1. Advantages and Challenges for U.S. Exporters**

Advantages	Challenges
The U.S.-Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement (CTPA) provides preferential product treatment for many agricultural goods.	Colombia has trade agreements with many other countries, increasing competition with U.S. products.
The United States holds a reputation for producing high quality agricultural products.	Colombian per capita consumption for processed and semi-processed products is low; for example, bread consumption is only 22 kg per year, low compared to other Latin American markets.
Increased acceptance of American style restaurants provides an avenue for introducing U.S. recipes and food ingredients into the Colombian diet.	Depreciation of the Colombian peso affects U.S. export competitiveness.

Growing tourism increases demand for raw materials and ingredients to make products more appealing to foreigners and domestic consumers.	There is a cultural perception that frozen products are unhealthy and lack quality.
Growing urbanization of Colombian cities is stimulating new consumer trends and an increase in processed foods.	Internal transportation costs from ports of entry are high due to extremely poor infrastructure.
Market opportunities for health foods and organic products are expanding given government support for healthy living campaigns.	Cold chain is deficient and increases logistical costs.
U.S. food suppliers and manufacturers have a positive reputation for food safety, availability, quality, and delivery.	The Petro administration campaigned on renegotiating the CTPA to protect domestic agriculture and manufacturing.

## SECTION II: ROAD MAP FOR MARKET ENTRY

### Entry Strategy

- Any U.S. exporter entering the Colombian market should understand customer needs and their purchasing requirements and specifications. Additionally, they must understand all Colombian standards and regulations to avoid clearance delays at ports of entry;
- Competition is based on quality, price, and service;
- Conduct market research to better understand competitors, consumer preferences, and the business environment;
- Build relationships with large importers and wholesalers/distributors;
- Highlight social responsibility in marketing techniques by using sales to generate funding for social programs;
- Develop ways to meet the needs of the Colombian market, ideally through personal visits, to have a greater understanding of the market and identify needs of buyers and developing trends;
- Consider consolidation when exporting small amounts of product;
- Develop business relationships with top executives (marketing directors, purchasing managers, etc.) and expose them to U.S. business practices;
- Participate in local trade and promotion shows, as well as food festivals, such as [Agroexpo](#), [Alimentec](#), [Expovinos](#), [SaborBarranquilla](#), and [Expo IAlimentos](#), to learn about consumer trends;
- Participate in trade delegations;
- Attend trade events in the United States like the [National Restaurant Association Show](#), the [Sweets and Snacks Expo](#), or the [Americas Food and Beverage Show](#), which provide opportunities to meet and educate Colombian importers;
- Develop Spanish marketing/communication materials;
- Work closely with local importers to comply with food import regulations to facilitate the registration and import of food products and minimize port of entry risks; and,
- Support the importer with promotional campaigns.

For more information on doing business in Colombia, see the [Colombia Country Commercial Guide](#).

### Market Structure

In 2022, Colombia's retail sector performed positively supported by strong household consumption. Looking ahead, higher prices will lower consumer purchase power and limit the sector's growth. Hard-discounters continue to do well, offering good-quality products at reasonable prices, and convenient locations close to buyers. E-commerce also continues to grow, thanks to Colombians' rapid digital

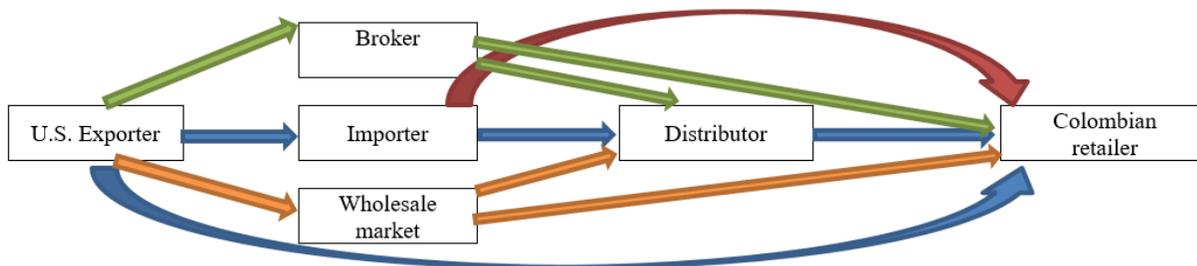
adoption, forcing retailers to develop online sales channels, and strengthening applications (apps) already present in the market, such as [Rappi](#) and [Merqueo](#).

**Table 2.**  
**Colombian Retail Structure**

<b>Modern channel</b>	<b>Cash and Carry:</b> <a href="#">Makro</a> , <a href="#">PriceSmart</a> , and <a href="#">Surtimayorista</a> are the main players. Only PriceSmart operates using the membership model, and it is perceived as a place where consumers can find a wide variety of imported products, mostly from the United States.
	<b>Supermarkets:</b> <a href="#">Olimpica</a> , <a href="#">Carulla</a> , and <a href="#">Colsubsidio</a> lead the segment. Strengthening private label product portfolio and developing an e-commerce strategy were their priorities. Independent supermarkets are also popular. These family-owned businesses developed their own private label products and expanded their presence in the country. Some brands were <a href="#">Zapatoca</a> and <a href="#">Euro</a> . Supermarket sales grew 6 percent in 2022.
	<b>Hypermarkets:</b> <a href="#">Exito</a> , <a href="#">Alkosto</a> , <a href="#">Jumbo</a> , <a href="#">Supertiendas Olimpica</a> , and <a href="#">Metro</a> are the leaders in this category. Discounters challenged this segment, which had to adapt to consumers’ needs, especially to use space more efficiently. Sales grew 5 percent in 2022.
	<b>Discounters:</b> the main players are <a href="#">DI</a> and <a href="#">ARA</a> . <a href="#">Isimo</a> , a new brand, is owned by Olimpica. It has 258 outlets and expects to expand to 420 outlets during the first year of operations. Their proximity to consumers, appealing private label portfolio, and competitive prices have been the drivers for their performance. Sales increased 15 percent in 2022.
	<b>Convenience stores:</b> <a href="#">OXXO</a> , Exito Express, and Metro Express are the key players of this segment, mostly located close to universities and business clusters. Gas station stores like Primax, <a href="#">Altoque</a> , and On the Run are part of this segment. They widened their portfolio to target households and mitigate decrease in sales due to virtuality. They are specialized in on-the-go products and prepared snacks. Euromonitor reported a 15 percent increase in sales in 2022.
<b>Traditional channel</b>	<b>Mom &amp; Pop stores:</b> This channel had a strong presence throughout the country with approximately 700,000 outlets. Mom & Pop stores have played a key role in the local economy and are perceived as strong sources of income and employment, as well as credit suppliers. Discounters were their biggest competitor in terms of proximity to consumers and lower prices.

Depending on the retailer’s size and the product, U.S. food products move from the exporter through an importer, broker, and distributor, or go directly to the retailer.

**Figure 1.**  
**Flow of U.S. Product from U.S. Exporter to Colombian Retailer**



## Company Profiles & Top Host Country Retailers

**Table 3.**  
**Main Food Retailers in Colombia**

Type	Retailer	Sales (\$ million)	Outlets	Website
		2022	2022	
Supermarket/hypermarket/ cash and carry	Grupo Éxito	\$3,386	515	<a href="https://www.carulla.com/">https://www.carulla.com/</a> <a href="https://www.exito.com/">https://www.exito.com/</a> <a href="https://www.surtimax.com.co/">https://www.surtimax.com.co/</a> <a href="https://www.superinter.com.co/">https://www.superinter.com.co/</a> <a href="https://www.surtimayorista.com/">https://www.surtimayorista.com/</a>
Hard discount	Koba Colombia (D1)	\$3,292	2,200	<a href="http://www.tiendasd1.com/">http://www.tiendasd1.com/</a>
Hypermarket	Alkosto	\$2,610	18	<a href="http://www.alkosto.com/">http://www.alkosto.com/</a>
Supermarket/hypermarket	Olímpica	\$2,046	876	<a href="http://www.olimpica.com/">http://www.olimpica.com/</a>
Soft discount	Jerónimo Martins (ARA)	\$1,834	402	<a href="https://www.aratiendas.com/">https://www.aratiendas.com/</a>
Supermarket/hypermarket	Cencosud	\$1,097	140	<a href="https://www.tiendasjumbo.co/">https://www.tiendasjumbo.co/</a> <a href="https://www.tiendasmetro.co/">https://www.tiendasmetro.co/</a>

Source: various online sources

### SECTION III: COMPETITION

#### Competition Narrative

- U.S. competitors for raw materials include MERCOSUR, Canada, and the European Union. These countries/markets also have free trade agreements with Colombia. The U.S.-Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement (CTPA) entered into force in May 2012. This comprehensive trade agreement eliminated tariffs and other barriers to goods and services. Although over 80 percent of U.S. exports of consumer and industrial products to Colombia are classified as duty-free, the CTPA provides a duty-free tariff-rate-quota (TRQ) on certain goods that operate under a first come/first serve basis. Notable exceptions to the CTPA include rice and poultry, which are subject to auctions managed by Export Trading Companies (ETC). Additional information on these two exceptions is available at the links provided: [Colombia Poultry Export Quota](#) and [Colombia Rice Export Quota](#).
- U.S. competitors for raw materials include MERCOSUR, Canada, and the European Union. These countries/markets also have free trade agreements with Colombia. For more information on Colombia's free trade agreements and current negotiations, please see [FTAs - Colombia](#)
- Colombian consumers have become increasingly conscious of the source of their food following the COVID-19 pandemic and recent demonstrations. This change encourages consumers to purchase products made domestically.

More information on Colombia's policy issues affecting U.S. product competitiveness is available at [FAIRS](#).

**Table 4.**  
**Consumer-Oriented Product Imports in Colombia**

Description	Imports (\$ million)					Variation
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2021-2022
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,081</b>	<b>2,093</b>	<b>1,916</b>	<b>2,378</b>	<b>2,841</b>	<b>20%</b>
Dairy Products	206	244	284	283	397	40%
Pork & Pork Products	226	236	158	301	314	4%
Soup & Other Food Preparations	256	279	224	257	302	18%
Distilled Spirits	83	101	95	158	201	27%
Processed Vegetables	103	112	107	140	198	42%
Fresh Fruit	164	165	162	168	180	7%
Bakery Goods, Cereals, & Pasta	107	118	109	115	148	28%
Mfg. Tobacco	59	84	108	106	121	13%
Dog & Cat Food	44	50	64	89	118	32%
Poultry Meat & Prods. (ex. eggs)	87	114	90	122	110	-10%
Wine & Related Products	57	67	71	79	105	32%
Processed Fruit	70	68	56	66	79	21%
Chocolate & Cocoa Products	57	60	56	66	71	8%
Nursery Products & Cut Flowers	33	32	34	54	60	11%
Condiments & Sauces	38	42	41	54	57	6%
Beef & Beef Products	26	32	26	45	54	21%
Fresh Vegetables	24	35	38	41	48	19%
Non-Alcoholic Beverages	196	30	33	43	48	12%
Tree Nuts	35	33	34	38	42	13%
Chewing Gum & Candy	34	36	25	30	42	42%
Coffee, Roasted and Extracts	23	29	26	28	41	46%
Beer	93	68	24	35	34	-2%
Spices	22	19	22	23	24	1%
Meat Products NESOI	13	13	10	12	14	18%
Fruit & Vegetable Juices	11	12	7	11	12	12%
Eggs & Products	4	4	4	4	10	144%
Tea	10	10	8	10	9	-2%

Source: Trade Data Monitor

#### **SECTION IV: BEST PRODUCT PROSPECTS CATEGORIES**

- **Products Present in the Market which have Good Sales Potential:** dog and cat food; distilled spirits; beef and beef products; fresh and processed vegetables; and dairy products.
- **Top Consumer-Oriented Products Imported from the World:** dairy products; pork and pork products; soup and other food preparations; distilled spirits; and processed vegetables.
- **Top Consumer-Oriented Products Imported from the United States:** pork and pork products; dairy products; poultry meat and products; dog and cat food; and food preparations.
- **Products Not Present in Significant Quantities but which have Good Sales Potential:** eggs and products, beer, and fresh vegetables.
- **Products That Face Significant Barriers:**
  - The introduction of new U.S. processed meat products has been affected due to the decreasing number of U.S. states that issue a Certificate of Free Sale (COFS) for federally

inspected products. Per Resolution 2674 of 2013, the Colombian food safety authority INVIMA (Colombian FDA equivalent) requires importers to submit a COFS when registering retail-ready processed meat products for sale in Colombia.

- On November 9, 2020, Colombia’s Ministry of Health and Social Protection (MINHEALTH) set mandatory maximum sodium content limits for 59 processed food categories ranging from snacks to processed meats and dairy products. Resolution 2013 introduces a new conformity certificate requirement and reduction goals that will start going into effect in November 2022. More information is available at [Update on Colombia Sodium Resolution 2013 of 2020 for Processed Foods GAIN Report](#)
- On June 16, 2021, MINHEALTH established the technical regulation for nutrition and front-of pack labeling requirements for packaged food for human consumption. On July 30, 2021, Colombian Congress enacted Law 2120 of 2021, widely known in the country as the “Junk Food” bill. This legislation is expected to lead to further changes to current labeling requirements for food products in Colombia. More information is available at [Colombia Issues Nutrition and Front of Pack Labeling Requirements for Processed Foods GAIN Report](#)
- MINHEALTH established physical and chemical properties requirements (including minimum lactic content) that must be met by milk for human consumption. Colombia is currently conducting the Regulatory Impact Analysis required prior to drafting changes to Decree 616. The USG encourages Colombia to remove Decree 616’s minimum lactic acid content requirement and harmonize the requirements with international standards (CODEX) that establish that acidity is a quality parameter and not a food safety issue.

More information on Colombia’s policy issues affecting U.S. product competitiveness is available at [FAIRS](#).

## SECTION V: KEY CONTACTS AND FURTHER INFORMATION

**Table 5.**

### Post contact information

Office of Agricultural Affairs (OAA)	Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS)
U.S. Embassy, Bogotá, Colombia Telephone: (57-1) 275-4622 e-mail : <a href="mailto:AgBogota@fas.usda.gov">AgBogota@fas.usda.gov</a>	U.S. Embassy, Bogotá, Colombia Phone: (57-1) 275-4572 e-mail: <a href="mailto:Roberto.Guzman@aphis.usda.gov">Roberto.Guzman@aphis.usda.gov</a>

**Table 6.**

### Regulatory agency contacts

Phytosanitary and Zoosanitary Requirements	Food Product Registration and Health Permits
<a href="#">Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development ICA</a> (APHIS counterpart) Alfonso Araujo Deputy Manager Animal Health Protection Tel. +57-601-7563030 ext. 3201 e-mail: <a href="mailto:subgerencia.animal@ica.gov.co">subgerencia.animal@ica.gov.co</a>	<a href="#">Ministry of Health and Social Protection INVIMA</a> (FDA counterpart) Carlos Alberto Robles Director Division of Food and Alcoholic Beverages Phone: +57-601-7422121 Ext. 4001 e-mail: <a href="mailto:croblesc@invima.gov.co">croblesc@invima.gov.co</a>
Alberto Rosero Deputy Manager Plant Health Protection Tel: +57-601-7563030 ext. 3101 e-mail: <a href="mailto:subgerencia.vegetal@ica.gov.co">subgerencia.vegetal@ica.gov.co</a>	

**Import Procedure:** The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Tourism (MINCIT) and the National Tax and Customs Directorate (DIAN) are responsible for the administration of overall import-export operations and customs procedures, respectively. Colombian importers must be registered with MINCIT. All U.S. exporters seeking to sell to a Colombian importer should verify that the importer has obtained the legal authorization to import food and agricultural products from MINCIT and, depending on the type of product to be imported, other government authorities including the Colombian Institute for Agriculture and Livestock (ICA) and the National Institute for the Surveillance of Food and Medicines (INVIMA). ICA has the regulatory authority over the production, manufacturing, and use of agricultural inputs (fertilizers, pesticides, seeds, etc.), feed, feed ingredients and non-processed agricultural commodities. INVIMA is the regulatory authority responsible for regulating food safety and sanitary conditions of products sold directly or indirectly for human consumption. More information on Colombia’s import procedure is available at [FAIRS](#).

**Table 8.  
Import Policies**

<b>Requirement</b>	<b>Regulation</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Food product registration</b>	<a href="#">Resolution 2674 / 2013</a> <a href="#">Resolution 3168 / 2015</a> <a href="#">Resolution 719 / 2015</a>	All food items intended for direct sale to final consumers in Colombia must be registered with INVIMA. Product registration is NOT required for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Natural food products that have not been subject to a transformation process (grains, fresh fruits, and vegetables, etc.)</li> <li>•Animal-origin food products (chilled/frozen) that have not been subject to any transformation process</li> <li>•Products used as inputs by foodservice operators or food processors for food preparation or manufacturing</li> </ul>
<b>Importer Registration, Import Registration, and Import Licensing</b>	<a href="http://www.vuce.gov.co">www.vuce.gov.co</a>	Importers must be registered with MINCIT, and must obtain an “electronic signature” from the Ministry of Finance at the “Unique Window for Foreign Trade” (VUCE)
<b>Minimum Description</b>	<a href="#">Resolution 057 / 2015</a>	Imported products shall comply with the “minimum description” requirements
<b>Export Sanitary Certificates</b>	<a href="#">Decree 2478</a>	Importers must submit a “sanitary certificate,” issued by the food safety authority in the country of origin, for any batch or lot of “medium” or “high” risk food products imported into Colombia, including all animal-derived products such as dairy, seafood, meat, and poultry

For additional information about exporting to Colombia, see [Exporter Guide](#).

**Attachments:**

No Attachments