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Report Highlights:

Demand for U.S. consumer-oriented products in the Caribbean region reached \$1.5 billion in 2022, a 26 percent gain compared to the previous year. As post-pandemic tourism continues to rebound, demand for poultry, dairy, bakery goods, cereals and pasta, and beef remains strong.

The demand for U.S. consumer-oriented products in the Caribbean region reached \$1.5 billion in 2022, a 26 percent gain compared to the previous year, as the result of continued strong demand for poultry meat, dairy, bakery, cereal & pasta, and beef.

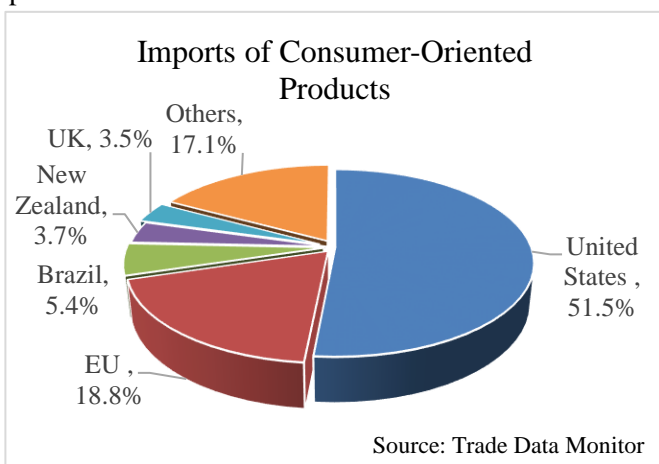
Market Fact Sheet: Caribbean

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 contribute to the attractiveness of this market.

Imports of Consumer-Oriented Products

Practically all foods must be imported, as domestic production is quite limited. Total imports of consumer-oriented agricultural products totaled \$2.99 billion in 2022, with the United States capturing 51.5 percent of the market.



Food Processing Industry

Given very limited agricultural activity, food processing is also minimal in most countries.

Food Retail Industry

An estimated 85 percent of imported foods and beverages are channeled through the retail sector. This sector includes traditional grocery stores to more modern, upscale supermarkets. Total grocery retail sales (excl. sales tax) are estimated at \$9.8 billion in 2022.

Food Service Industry

Tourism is a key factor in generating demand for U.S. products in the food service sector.

Quick Facts CY 2022

Imports of Consumer-Oriented Products

\$2.99 billion

Top 10 Growth Products

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

Food Industry by Channels (USD billion) 2022

Imports of Consumer-Oriented Products* \$ 2.99

Consumer Food Service Annual Sales \$ 1.87

Grocery Retail Annual Sales \$ 9.98

*Based on reporting countries export statistics (excludes freight, insurance & import duties).

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: 4.9 million (December 2022 estimate)

GDP: \$500 million (British Virgin Island, 2017 est.) -

\$35.1 billion (Trinidad and Tobago, 2021 est.)

Top Markets by GDP per capita

Bermuda \$80,300, Cayman Island \$67,500, Aruba \$38,900

Source: Euromonitor Intl., CIA World Factbook, U.S. Census Bureau.

Strength/Weaknesses/Opportunities/Challenges

Strengths	Weaknesses
Proximity; well-established relationships between U.S. suppliers and Caribbean buyers.	There is a decline in real wage growth, a decrease in buying power, and rising poverty rates.
Opportunities	Threats
The tourism industry is nearly back to normal, providing opportunities for U.S. food importers and distributors.	Growing food security concerns; the region is looking to diversify imports and increase 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 4.9 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 \$790 million in Dominica to \$35.15 billion in Trinidad and Tobago. GDP per capita ranges from \$9,900 in Dominica to \$81,800 in Bermuda. The economy of Trinidad and Tobago, by far the largest in the region, is based mainly on oil and natural gas. In Guyana, where one of the largest new discoveries of oil in the world was recently made, the country is also banking on oil to propel its economy forward and serve as a catalyst for much needed development. In practically all other Caribbean markets, tourism is the driving force behind island economies. Approximately 8 million stopover tourists and 14 million cruise ship passengers visited the region in 2022. Tourists, particularly stopover visitors, fuel demand for consumer-oriented agricultural products.

The GDP growth of tourism-dependent Caribbean countries grew by 9 percent in 2022 and remains relatively flat compared with 2021. The economy is expected to return to a more normal level by 3.2 percent in 2023. St. Lucia experienced the most growth at 15.7 percent, followed by The Bahamas at 14.4 percent and Aruba at 10.5 percent in 2022. Guyana's economy continues to expand rapidly. According to the International Monetary Fund, GDP growth will be 62.3 percent in 2022, the highest in the world, and expected to grow by 38 percent by 2023.

In general, the economy in the region is also 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, the level of reliance on foreign investment can vary among different Caribbean countries.

¹*The 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 to U.S. agricultural suppliers exporting to the Caribbean.

Advantages	Challenges
With little arable land and food production, Caribbean markets must import most of their food needs.	Countries are increasingly interested in decreasing food and agricultural imports and relying upon local production to meet demand.
U.S. exporters, particularly South Florida consolidators, service the market well and are better positioned to supply the Caribbean than competitors.	The market is highly fragmented, making direct market entry more difficult. Selling through distributors can be a cost-effective way to enter.
The United States has a dominant market share in the vast majority of Caribbean islands (estimated at 51.5 percent).	In some markets, such as Guadeloupe and Martinique, a key constraint is breaking the traditional ties with Europe. Practically all of their trading is done with mainland France.
The regulatory environment at present is generally open to U.S. products.	Some products, particularly meat and poultry, may be restricted in certain markets due to EU or island-specific regulations.
Many U.S. suppliers have a strong reliable reputation as they adhere to high food safety standards, quality assurance, and capacity for continuous replenishment.	Exporters' ability to adjust product portfolios to meet the requirements of healthy programs.

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, weighing the advantages and disadvantages of using an importer/wholesaler versus selling directly to different customers throughout the region is important. The decision will be different for all U.S. exporters. For instance, 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. Shows with a strong presence of Caribbean importers include 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. 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. This, in turn, further influences consumer preferences, besides Caribbean comfort cuisine that offers a wide range of flavors and dishes such as fried fish, conch salads, peas and rice.

One important development in the market is the growing concern regarding the rise of obesity and diabetes in the region. According to the International Diabetes Federation, the prevalence of diabetes in the Caribbean ranges from 18 percent in Barbados, nearly double the world average, to 5 percent in Aruba. 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. Thus, as in many other parts of the world, Caribbean consumers, especially young consumers, are attempting to take a more active role in purchasing healthy foods. Nonetheless, price is still a predominant factor when making purchasing decisions in the region. Some countries are addressing health care programs to promote healthy eating alternatives and following nutritional guidelines.

SECTION III. IMPORT FOOD STANDARDS & REGULATIONS and IMPORT PROCEDURES

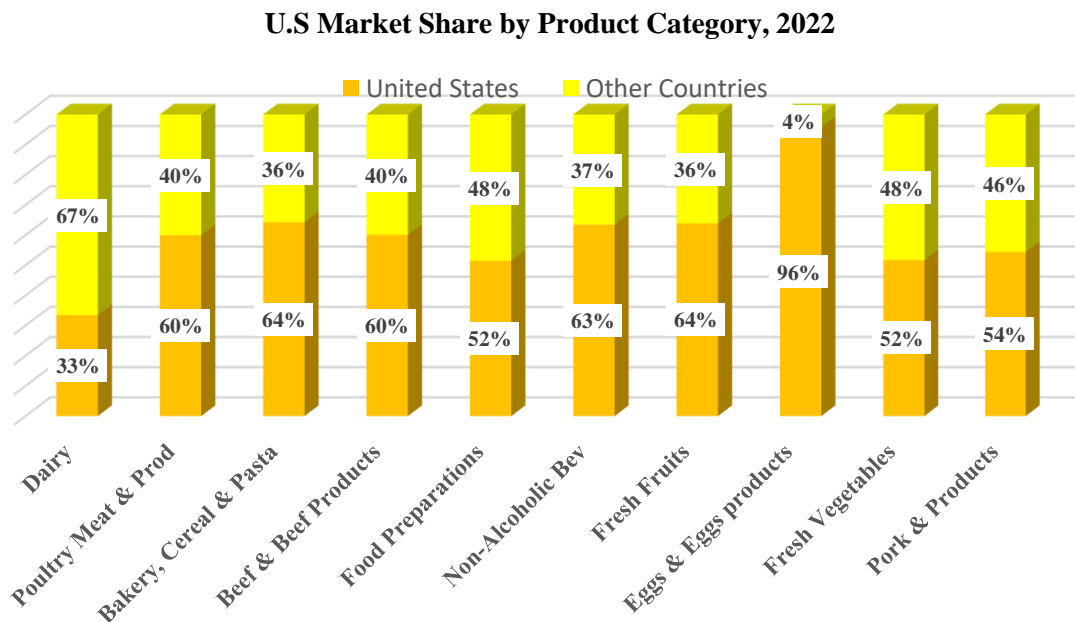
In most Caribbean countries, food safety responsibilities fall under the Ministry of Public Health or its equivalent. The Ministry of Agriculture may also play a role in plant and animal products regarding both public health, and plant and animal health. Meat and poultry, dairy products, seafood, and 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 dairy products, poultry meat & products (ex. eggs), bakery products, soups and other prepared foods, and beef & beef products. These five categories alone represent approximately one third of all consumer-oriented product imports. With only a few exceptions, the United States has the leading market share in practically all product categories.



Source: Trade Data Monitor.

A. Retail Sector

An estimated 85 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.

Caribbean ¹ : Grocery Retail by Type, 2022		
Outlet Type	Number of Outlets	Retail Sales \$ Millions
Convenience Retailers	1,277	793
Supermarkets	591	3,701
Hypermarkets	45	1,439
Discounters	205	1,091
Warehouse Clubs	3	255
Food/Drink/Tobacco Specialists	5,059	1,206
Small Local Grocers	9,074	1,502
Total	16,254	9,986

Excludes¹ Turks and Caicos, Montserrat, St. Martin, St. Barts, BES
Source: Euromonitor

According to Euromonitor International, grocery retail sales in the CBATO region totaled an estimated \$9.98 billion in 2022, an increase of 3 percent over 2021. The number of retail outlets in the region decreased by 1.7 percent in 2022 from 16,527 to 16,254, primarily as the result of closing retail outlets in the French Caribbean.

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 (The 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.

B. HRI Food Service Sector

The Caribbean HRI food service sector is estimated to account for roughly 15 percent of consumer-oriented agricultural imports. According to Euromonitor International, the industry is made up of over 7,083 outlets, with full-service restaurants, cafes, and bars accounting for three-quarters of these.

Caribbean ¹ : Food Service Operators by Type, 2022		
Type	Number of Units	Food Service Sales \$ Millions
Cafes & Bars	864	182
Full-Service Restaurants	2,966	621
Limited-Service Restaurants	885	993
Street Stalls & Kiosks	2,368	83
TOTAL	7,083	1,879

Excludes¹ Turks and Caicos, Montserrat, St. Martin, St. Barts, BES
Source: Euromonitor

With only 12 percent of all outlets, limited-service restaurants (mainly fast-food chains) account for 53 percent of the sector's total sales, estimated at \$1.87 billion in 2022. With the expected continued growth in tourism, HRI food service sales could expand to \$2.1 billion, increasing by 11 percent in 2023.

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 have boomed over recent years, independently owned food service businesses are still strong on all Caribbean islands. 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. Using high-quality ingredients, 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.

C. Food Processing Sector

Food processing in the broad Caribbean Basin is highly concentrated in the larger countries such as the Dominican Republic and Jamaica, which are outside the CBATO region, and to a lesser extent in Trinidad and Tobago. Food processing is much less prevalent because food production is limited in the CBATO region, and there are minimal economies of scale. In 2022, bulk and intermediate agricultural products accounted for only 20.4 percent of U.S. agricultural exports to the CBATO region. Food processors in the region purchase approximately 20 percent of their raw materials and food ingredients from local suppliers and import approximately 80 percent from international suppliers. Trinidad and Tobago and Barbados do, however, process wheat flour, pasta, bakery, soy, dairy products, and animal feed.

SECTION V. AGRICULTURAL AND FOOD IMPORTS

In 2022, the region imported \$3.81 billion in agricultural products, an increase of 18 percent from 2021. The top five markets in the region for agricultural products from the world are The Bahamas, Trinidad and Tobago, Aruba, Guyana and Barbados. Together, these markets account for over two-quarters 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. accounts for 86 percent; in the Cayman Islands where the U.S. accounts for 78 percent of the food and beverage market; and in The Bahamas where the U.S. accounts for 76 percent or more of all agricultural imports. In the French overseas departments of Guadeloupe and Martinique, where most products are imported from mainland France, U.S. foods are few and far between, and U.S. market share is minimal. Given limited domestic agricultural output and food processing, consumer-oriented foods top the main categories of agricultural imports with 80 percent. The remainder comprises intermediate or semi-processed products (10.6 percent) and bulk commodities (9.8 percent).

U.S. Exports of Agricultural Products to the Caribbean, 2018-2022

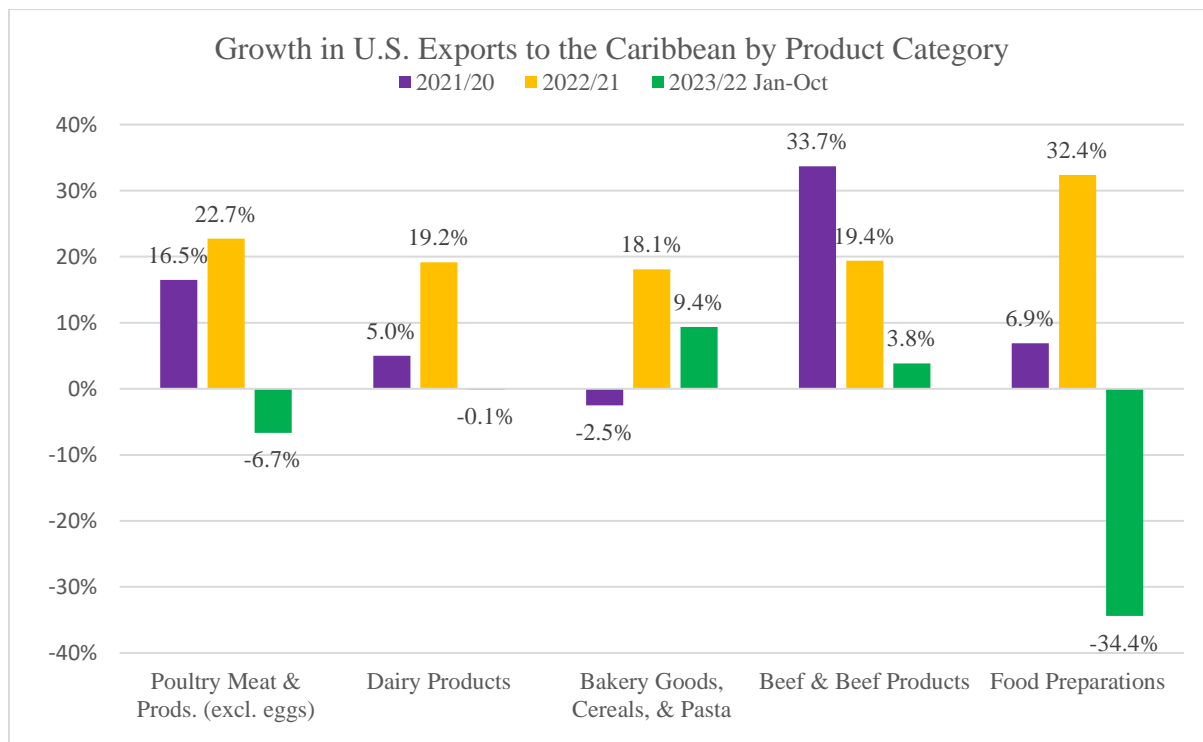
Product Category	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
	Value (US\$)				
Bulk Total	143,327	125,953	141,712	155,741	188,926
Intermediate Total	165,942	153,060	145,202	176,051	205,387
Consumer Oriented Total	1,120,289	1,183,322	1,024,048	1,168,667	1,538,029
Poultry Meat & Prods. (ex. eggs)	124,161	128,216	111,307	133,236	174,485
Bakery Goods, Cereals, & Pasta	106,889	119,171	110,527	107,730	131,525
Dairy Products	104,634	112,541	97,231	101,926	127,594
Soup & Other Food Preparations	77,967	86,042	84,935	89,217	125,094
Beef & Beef Products	88,574	96,132	71,821	96,086	119,248
Non-Alcoholic Bev. (ex. juices, coffee, tea)	72,271	74,954	64,695	70,610	89,441
Fresh Fruit	49,389	52,414	55,117	64,397	78,148
Eggs & Products	44,361	43,217	44,857	49,941	77,812
Fresh Vegetables	43,035	44,300	42,161	47,316	73,141
Pork & Pork Products	45,314	51,213	44,553	54,334	64,749
Condiments & Sauces	37,017	38,831	36,096	40,585	52,321
Wine & Related Products	36,527	37,888	22,989	38,093	51,250
Processed Vegetables	36,280	33,193	32,323	34,898	45,956
Dog & Cat Food	30,671	33,756	32,563	33,650	44,050
Distilled Spirits	24,340	30,776	21,063	27,295	43,237
Meat Products	48,993	41,926	31,678	31,891	41,484
Beer	17,603	18,491	12,475	18,888	40,290

Fruit & Vegetable Juices	28,384	30,476	25,121	24,995	37,509
Chocolate & Cocoa Products	17,862	19,278	15,033	16,774	22,123
Nursery Products & Cut Flowers	21,998	21,473	11,979	19,366	20,596
Processed Fruit	15,188	18,418	14,949	17,112	20,044
Tree Nuts	13,452	15,351	13,931	16,349	16,762
Coffee, Roasted and Extracts	8,588	10,425	6,999	8,685	13,562
Chewing Gum & Candy	11,230	11,753	7,608	9,711	10,823
Spices	6,167	5,646	5,152	6,949	7,842
Tea	4,291	3,846	3,094	3,039	3,290
TOTAL Agricultural Products	1,429,558	1,462,335	1,310,962	1,500,459	1,932,342

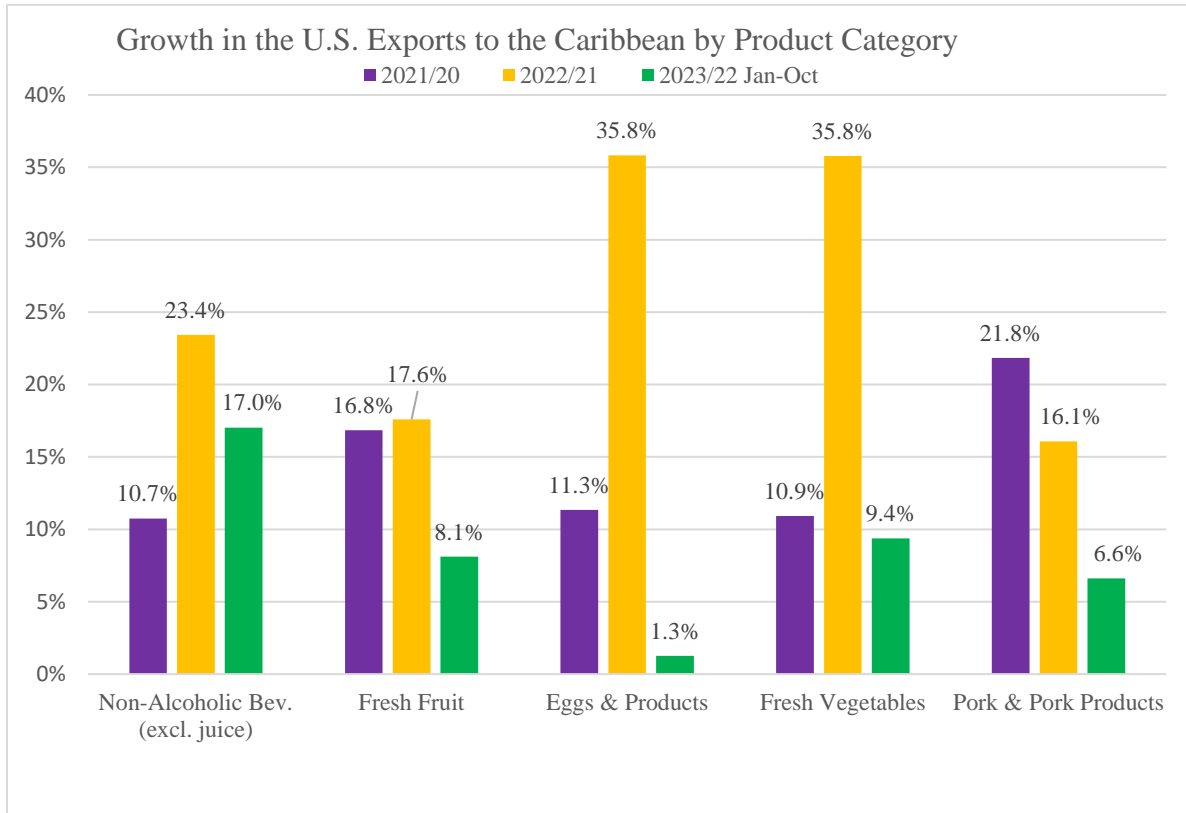
Source: U.S. Census Bureau

The tourism industry significantly contributes to the region's GDP, leading to the economy's recovery. According to the International Labour Organization, international tourism in the Americas has recovered 85 percent from the pre-pandemic level in 2023. Additionally, the economy benefits from increased demand and higher energy prices in some commodity-exporting countries, such as Guyana. However, as economic conditions improve in the Caribbean, opportunities for consumer-oriented products will increase. In particular, value products and healthy foods are expected to continue to grow 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, beef products, non-alcoholic beverages, fresh fruit, and eggs products.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

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