

STRAWBERRIES, FRESH: U.S. IMPORTS FROM MEXICO¹

[In thousands of pounds]

Month	Year beginning November 1—							
	1960	1961	1962	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967
November.....		43	41	394	464	746	870	982
December.....	23	201	403	703	931	1,256	3,080	4,730
January.....	26	187	576	210	722	1,945	2,730	6,850
February.....	10	150	702	538	729	1,849	4,741	6,439
March.....	305	329	319	1,357	1,273	2,288	4,741	3,205
April.....	19	72	595	354	921	1,519	2,912	2,390
May.....	4	14	113	233	111	176	748	
Total.....	387	966	2,449	3,794	5,151	9,779	18,715	

¹ The Mexican season for fresh marketing begins in November of the year shown and ends in May of the following year.

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture.

All of the entries of fresh strawberries from Mexico enter at the "non-seasonal" rate of duty of 0.75 cents per pound (about 4.8 percent AVE in 1967). Most of the small imports from Canada enter at the seasonal (June 15–September 15) rate of 0.5 cents per pound—the equivalent of about 1.4 percent ad valorem in 1967.

Mexican strawberry production began in significant commercial quantities in 1948. The first shipments to the United States were frozen strawberries, and the sizeable shipments of fresh strawberries commenced in 1959. During the 1965 crop year Mexico produced about 110 million pounds of strawberries, more than 80 percent of which are estimated to have been exported to the United States, particularly in the form of frozen strawberries.

In the Bajío—which is the principal growing area and which extends from Leon and Irapuato on the north to Zamora on the west and Morelia on the east and covers the major portion of the State of Guanajuato and of Michoacán—strawberries have been the most important horticultural crop grown and processed.¹ In recent years growers, as well as processors, have begun diversifying production, and this area is becoming an important center for freezing vegetables for export. Prior to a huge crop in 1965–66, the area experienced a large expansion in both acreage and production facilities. Subsequently, the emphasis was placed upon marketings geared to sales that could be made at profitable prices, and efforts have been made to diversify by producing other commodities such as fruit juices, nectar concentrates, and the like.

U.S. imports of frozen strawberries from Mexico reached a peak of 82.9 million pounds in 1966. The resulting low prices, coupled with adverse weather, brought a reduction in imports the following year. Imports of frozen berries during January–March 1968 were about twice those of the comparable period in 1967. However, imports during April were less than half as large as in April 1967, so that total imports through April were about the same as those of last year. Processors and growers in the Bajío expect total 1967–68 exports to be no larger than in the previous season. The freezers believe that under present conditions exports should be in the neighborhood of 70 million pounds.

The frozen berries are trucked to the United States, with the bulk of the shipments entering at Laredo. The 30-pound can of whole berries is the standard pack although some berries are sliced upon order. Some processors are individually quick freezing (IQF) selected large berries, but IQF installations are limited to a few processors. Almost all of the imports from Mexico are of large (over 10 pound) packs for use by the manufacturers of preserves, jams, ice cream, baking products, and the like. About 50 percent of the domestic output of frozen strawberries has been put up in large containers in recent years for the food processing industries.

While the imports of the frozen pack from Mexico enter the United States the year around, the bulk of the entries in recent years has occurred during the spring and early summer season.

¹ The following discussion of the Mexican industry is taken from the U.S.D.A. publication, *Mexico's Production of Horticultural Products for Export*, FAS-M-199, June 1968.