

STRAWBERRIES, FROZEN: U.S. IMPORTS FROM MEXICO

[Million pounds]

Month	Average 1959-61	1962	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968
January.....	0.3	0.3	0.7	0.7	1.5	2.2	3.6	6.8
February.....	1.2	1.0	2.7	1.8	4.5	6.2	1.3	7.9
March.....	3.4	6.5	7.3	13.0	9.3	12.7	6.6	7.5
April.....	6.5	8.7	8.1	9.6	13.0	22.1	17.7	7.6
May.....	5.7	5.3	7.0	5.6	7.0	15.0	12.3	-----
June.....	2.9	6.0	3.4	4.2	5.9	7.3	9.6	-----
July.....	1.4	1.4	2.3	2.8	3.1	5.2	5.0	-----
August.....	.4	1.3	1.0	.8	1.9	3.3	4.8	-----
September.....	.4	.6	.6	.6	.6	2.5	3.8	-----
October.....	.4	.6	.5	.1	.9	1.7	3.9	-----
November.....	.1	.4	.4	.2	1.9	2.5	1.1	-----
December.....	.3	.2	.6	.3	2.2	2.2	3.0	-----
Total.....	23.0	32.3	34.6	39.7	51.8	92.9	72.7	-----

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture.

During the current year, excess berries have been shipped fresh. Fresh shipments increased materially in the 1968 season, largely because of the voluntary restrictions on frozen berries. Reports indicate that grower associations are again discussing acreage restrictions for next season to enforce their orderly marketing plans. Similar efforts in the past, however, have not been effective.

Shipments of fresh strawberries can be expected to continue to increase. The growers ship their best size and quality berries to fresh markets and the balance to the freezer. About 75 percent of the fresh berries coming to the United States at McAllen, Texas, and most of the remainder cross at Laredo in the same State. Mexican fresh berries are also being airfreighted to Europe via the United States and Mexico City.

U.S. exports

U.S. exports of fresh strawberries, which until 1966-67 were larger than imports, traditionally have been to Canada. In recent years such exports have declined somewhat as Canadian imports from Mexico have increased. U.S. exports of fresh strawberries to Europe by air transport is a small but apparently growing trade. Exports of prepared strawberries, including frozen, are not separately reported but are believed to be small and to have consisted chiefly of shipments to Canada.

U.S. production

Strawberries are grown commercially in every State in the Union and constitute a perennial crop which provides production from the same acreage for both the fresh market and for processing. During 1961-66, about 55 percent of the average annual domestic crop was sold fresh. In California, which in recent years has accounted for about two-fifths of total U.S. production, from 65 percent to 75 percent of the crop is usually sold on the fresh market. In 1967, California's output totaled 209 million pounds (148 million for the fresh market) compared with 213 million pounds annually during 1962-66. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, California's 1968 harvest is estimated at 14 percent above last year's crop. The other ranking producers of strawberries for the fresh market are Florida, Michigan, Louisiana, New Jersey, and Arkansas. The bulk of the production in those States is marketed fresh, although about a third of the Michigan crop is normally processed. In contrast to California's gain in 1968, production in the latter States in the 1968 season is expected to be substantially below those of a year ago as a result of acreage reductions and a decline in yields due in part to adverse weather.