

THE FINAL ISSUE

Urner Barry's
Reporter

the newsmagazine for the food industry professional

VOLUME 19 | NUMBER 1 | WINTER 2024 | QUARTERLY

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TWO YEARS INTO THE
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From the Editor's Desk...

As the 19th volume gets underway for Urner Barry's *Reporter Newsmagazine*, I can't help but think back on its formative years, when we were taking a fledgling idea and giving it a life of its own. Like so many ventures into unfamiliar territory, the earliest issues experienced their share of trials, as Urner Barry took a then novel approach to an old idea and wrestled it into something that today is instantly recognizable.

In these days of rapid cultural and societal change, it's not surprising that we increasingly seek comfort in familiarity. This is not exactly shocking given tumultuous global events, such as COVID, or more industry-centric happenings, such as HPAI or labor challenges. Departure from the norm leaves us yearning for something we recognize, understand, and trust.

Naturally, one person's idea of what is normal or recognizable is not necessarily what breeds familiarity with someone else. But there is a "sweet spot" in there where learning from the past and welcoming the future intersect; a place that isn't easy to get to, but where we all strive to meet.

Welcoming the future frequently means giving up something from the past and, in doing so, losing some of the familiarity and comfort that is increasingly difficult to find today. Maybe that's why it's taken me well into this dialogue to announce that **Volume 19, No. 1, will be the final edition of Urner Barry's Reporter**. Time and circumstance have intervened and, while our editorial team will continue to cover the critical issues impacting today's food industry, they will do so without Urner Barry's *Reporter*.

I'd like to say "thank you" to our loyal readers, advertisers, and patrons, along with Urner Barry's dedicated staff who, each quarter for almost two decades, have been responsible for putting together the finest food industry newsmagazine ever produced! Inside this issue, we've taken a stroll down memory lane by featuring a few covers and spreads through the years, along with some behind the scenes pictures of the faces who have made it all possible.

I like to think that at Urner Barry, 165 years of familiarity has bred trust in our products, confidence in our staff and respect for our history. But being comfortable rarely leads to "greatness." Today, we hold close our traditional ideals while pursuing business efficiencies only dreamed of a few short years ago. And while that may come with sacrifice, we will continue to promote greater depth of knowledge, helping lead your business to unforeseen heights.

While this might be the final "From the Editors Desk..." it certainly won't be the last time you hear from me. In the meantime, when the new year rolls around, I'm going to approach 2024 not so much as out with the old and in with the new, but more like let's not forget what the past has taught us, and look forward to the future with great anticipation.

Stay in touch...



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Urner Barry's Reporter

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Restaurant employment makes long journey back to pre-COVID levels

Since the COVID pandemic essentially shut down the entire foodservice industry in 2020, the sector has been on a long road to recovery. Sales have improved gradually since 2021 and consumers are still opting to eat away from home despite sticky inflationary pressure.

Labor has been one of the biggest headwinds facing the industry. Food inflation is another topic but finding labor to feed a population with a big appetite to dine out has been a prolonged issue. Just like in the way sales have recovered since the shutdown in the spring of 2020, labor has now recovered as well.

Although the Department of Labor's October Jobs Report showed a slight decline in jobs in the restaurant and bar segment, the total sits just 0.1% below the employment peak seen in February 2020. Preliminary data in September indicated that the industry finally reached the mountaintop and recovered fully from the pandemic. However, later revisions have seen the industry come up just shy through October.

While the industry may not be 100% recovered, some massive players in the industry have reported in their financial reports that staffing levels are not the problem they were in recent years. Nation's Restaurant News cited Domino's CEO Russell Weiner stating that the company was back to 2019 service levels. Executives from Chipotle and Texas Roadhouse mirrored his sentiment, saying the brands were confident in meeting increased traffic levels.

Despite improvements in the labor department, companies in the foodservice space face multiple headwinds in the labor department. Wages remain elevated and some states are mandating certain pay rates for workers in the quick-service restaurant sector. According to Square, a company in the commerce and financial services space, workers in the food and drink industry are seeing faster growth than those in retail.

In California, the state raised the minimum wage for fast-food workers to \$20/hour. Although the move was just made this fall, major companies including McDonald's and Chipotle have already announced that they will increase menu prices in the state to offset costs. The new wage came as McDonald's reported a dip in traffic in its third-quarter financial results. CEO Chris Kempczinski noted that consumers who make less than \$45,000 visited stores less.

“...workers in the food and drink industry are seeing faster growth than those in retail.”

Although labor is in a better spot than it has been in recent years, companies are beginning to invest in artificial intelligence and robotics to help mitigate labor issues and the higher costs associated with labor.

Salad chain Sweetgreen has begun testing automated food preparation for some of its labor in hopes of limiting labor costs. The company debuted its “Infinite Kitchen” in Illinois that sees robots bear the brunt of the work. Other name-brand firms are making similar moves. Wendy's is working with Google to help automate its drive-thru experience and White Castle is working with another AI firm to help its drive-thru operations.

Despite a steady, albeit lengthy, recovery process, the struggle with labor doesn't seem to be going away any time soon and companies will continue to invest in new and innovative technologies to keep consumers coming back for more. [UB](#)

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New research “illuminates” the future of poultry production

The commercial broiler industry has come quite a long way since its inception back in 1923. What began as a small flock of roughly 500 meat-type birds in Sussex County Delaware has since snowballed into a multi-billion-dollar business sector, which routinely produces more broilers annually than there are people walking the planet!

At its core, the same principles from the early 1900’s remain in play 100 years later. However, the industry has become a whole lot more complex and efficient along the way. Perhaps the most recent example of the chicken industry’s unrelenting drive towards increased productivity is automation.

What was, at one time, a highly labor-intensive job of deboning front and back-half items, has now morphed into what is a practically hands-free process. Rather than populating the processing plant with line workers, companies are now shifting their recruitment efforts toward experts in robotic engineering, computer programming, and machine learning.

Slowly, but surely, the broiler industry is looking more and more like something out of a sci-fi movie. It is for this reason that some of the most recent studies on commercial poultry health stand out. For an industry that is dashing towards the technological era, the topic of poultry house lighting seems, well, rudimentary,

“When compared with natural sunlight, along with both 5 lux and 20 lux artificial lighting groups, poultry houses with a variable light program brought with them significantly lower mortality rates...”

at least at first glance. Several recent publications have shaken up everything we thought we knew about lighting.

The *Journal of Entomology and Zoology Studies* (2019) underscores just how important lighting is on flock health:

“Light helps the bird to establish rhythmicity and synchronize many essential functions, including body temperature and various metabolic steps that enhance feeding and digestion. Light also stimulates secretory patterns of hormones that have a role in growth, maturation, and reproduction. [Additionally], light has an impact on the pineal gland and helps in synchronization of circadian rhythm and inhibiting melatonin release. The circadian rhythm helps the bird to optimize their metabolism, physiology and behavioral pattern.”

But there’s more to lighting than “meets the eye.” It is important to bear in mind that our feathered friends perceive the electromagnetic spectrum much differently than we humans do. In addition to seeing what is conventionally considered to be the “visible” wavelengths, birds are also



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capable of seeing into the ultraviolet ranges. In fact, one publication from the *Journal of Applied Poultry Research* (2020) found that birds reared with supplemental ultraviolet light had significantly lower stress susceptibility and fear responses than the control group.

David Caldwell, head of the Department of Poultry Science within The University of Arkansas took this “illuminating” research one step further by investigating the impact that variable lighting intensity had on broiler welfare. In his study, Professor Caldwell found that variable lighting stimulated additional dustbathing behavior and the volunteer movement of birds. Litter moisture content and footpad lesions were also lower in houses where variable lighting was utilized.

Additionally, and perhaps most noteworthy, was the impact that variable lighting had on livability. When compared with natural sunlight, along with both 5 lux and 20 lux artificial lighting groups, poultry houses with a variable light program brought with

them significantly lower mortality rates by day 49 of the study. In fact, total mortality was found to be 25% lower in variably lit houses than it was in those with natural lighting. Average feed conversion was also 2.2% lower for the variably lit birds than it was in the 20 lux and naturally lit groups.

The commercial chicken industry has certainly made some innovative strides toward improving animal welfare, reducing production costs, and maximizing production over the past several decades. That being said, environmental conditions are far from existing in a perfect vacuum. Factors such as disease, hatchability, livability, and feed costs continue to impact the industry, much like they have over the past century. But rather than jumping headfirst into the world of technological complexity, sometimes a back-to-basics approach can offer a new and refreshing solution to some age-old challenges. [UB](#)

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Two years in: Russia-Ukraine war's impact on the agricultural marketplace

On February 24, 2022, Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine, resulting in far-reaching ramifications to human life and for the global marketplace.

Both Russia and Ukraine are among the world's most significant producers and exporters of agricultural goods. The two countries play a critical role in supplying the global market with critical commodities like fertilizer, grains, and oilseeds.

Prior to the invasion, global food and energy prices were already elevated. This was due in part to reduced supplies in major exporting countries caused by drought, along with pandemic-induced snags in the supply chain.

The near-term effects of the Russia-Ukraine war exacerbated high prices for various goods, with the ripple effects carrying on to this day.

Mintec Global closely monitors the war's impact on the global agricultural marketplace. Below, we explore the ongoing ramifications of the war as it approaches its two-year mark in 2024.

FERTILIZER

Fertilizers are chemical compounds that provide essential nutrients for plant growth. They are broadly split into organic and inorganic or commercial. Fertilizers provide three main nutrients: nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium.

Russia is the world's leading fertilizer exporter, as well as a major supplier of natural gas, which is the raw material for nitrogen fertilizer.

Fertilizer prices were on the rise since early 2020 due to supply chain complications combined with tight supplies. Western sanctions and trade restrictions on Russia's natural gas exports caused fertilizer prices to spike shortly after the invasion.

North American fertilizer prices surged to a record high in April 2022 at \$1,270.4, based on Green Markets North America Fertilizer Price Index. Prices have since eased to \$552.69 as of November 3, 2023, driven in part by declining prices for crops and natural gas.

GRAINS AND OILSEEDS

Ukraine is referred to as the "breadbasket of Europe" since more than half of Ukraine's land is arable. Agricultural products are Ukraine's most valuable exports.

Corn: Ukraine is the world's sixth-largest corn producer and is among the world's largest corn exporters. Corn futures on the Chicago Mercantile Exchange (CME) surged to \$8.16 per bushel in April 2022—a seasonal all-time high.

Corn futures have since declined sharply, with December corn priced at \$4.63 per bushel as of November 10, 2023—a year-to-date (YTD) decrease of 30%.

An anticipated large U.S. corn harvest, combined with increased competition from suppliers like Brazil and Argentina, have pressured corn prices lower.

Wheat: Russia is the world's leading wheat exporter, while Ukraine ranks among the world's top wheat exporters. Both countries are key suppliers to markets including the Middle East and North Africa.

Most of Ukraine's wheat production comprises of winter wheat, which is planted from September to mid-November.



The initial shock from the invasion sent CME wheat futures to a record \$14.25 per bushel in March 2022. Wheat prices have retreated to about \$5.76 per bushel as of November 10, 2023, bringing the YTD decrease to nearly 23%.

According to November's World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates report, Russian wheat production was forecast at 90 million tons, up 5 million from the October projection.

Ample Russian wheat supplies combined with reduced global use have contributed to a consistent decline in wheat prices since the start of 2023.

Soybeans: Ukraine is the world's ninth-largest producer and seventh-largest exporter of soybeans. Soybeans in Ukraine are planted from April through May and harvested August through September.

CME soybean futures hit seasonal all-time highs in Q2 2022, ranging from about \$16.80 to \$16.90 a bushel. Soybean futures softened to \$13.40 a bushel by November 10, 2023, notching a 12% YTD decrease.

Competitively priced and large supplies from suppliers like Brazil, coupled with a rapidly progressing U.S. harvest season and subdued demand from China, have pressured soybean prices lower.

VEGETABLE OILS

Global vegetable oil prices were especially impacted by the start of the war in 2022.

Historically, Russia and Ukraine combined accounted for over 50% of global sunflower oil production and exports.

A year after the invasion, global vegetable oil prices declined significantly from their record levels due to factors including improved supply conditions, higher year-over-year (YOY) global output and lower freight rates.

Rapeseed oil: Also known as canola oil, rapeseed oil is the third most produced edible oil and accounts for about an eighth of the world's vegetable oil production.

“Both Russia and Ukraine are among the world’s most significant producers and exporters of agricultural goods.”

Ukraine is the world's sixth-largest producer and third-largest exporter of rapeseed. Mintec reports that disruptions to the Black Sea supply of rapeseed and derivative products, combined with reduced output from Canada, led to higher prices last year.

The Mintec Benchmark Price (MBP) of Rapeseed Oil FOB Rotterdam was assessed at €950.50/mt as of November 8, 2023, down sharply from the record high reached in April 2022.

Mintec has observed a decline in rapeseed imports from Ukraine into the EU since prices are perceived as “too low.” The supply outlook appears sufficient due to increased stocks from Canada combined with the rapeseed crops from Ukraine in storage, contributing to a bearish outlook for rapeseed oil moving forward.

Sunflower oil: Typically, Ukraine is the world's top producer and exporter of

sunflower meal and oil. Ukraine produces one-third of the world's sunflower oil and accounts for almost half of global exports. Sunflowers are typically sown in April and May, with harvest beginning in September.

Based on Mintec's assessment, the price of sunflower oil spiked to over €2,022/mt in March 2022. Sunflower oil prices have since dropped significantly as of Q4 2023, partly attributed to accelerated sunflower seed harvests in Ukraine and Russia.

Many farmers in Ukraine plan to stick with the cautious, low-cost approach they employed this past growing season, according to Mintec. The focus is on wheat and sunflower production, foregoing more costly crops like corn and rapeseed.

In November, Mintec noted a drop in sunflower oil demand, as market players have secured 2023 supplies and may reduce prices to stimulate interest. Ongoing Black Sea tensions are intensifying competition between Russian and Ukrainian sunflower oil suppliers.

EXPORTS AND SHIPPING

Russia's invasion of Ukraine caused widespread damage to infrastructure, resulting in Ukraine's seaports to be nearly completely blocked from March through July 2022.

Ongoing security threats to Ukrainian ports, which are still at risk of drone and shelling attacks, are raising uncertainty about the level of demand for Ukrainian supplies.

Signed in July 2022, the Black Sea Grain Initiative enabled the safe passage of Ukraine grain exports through three key Ukrainian ports in the Black Sea—Odesa, Chornomorsk, Yuzhny/Pivdennyi.

The UN-brokered grain agreement relieved some international price pressures as more Ukrainian grain was able to leave the country. Russia did not renew the deal in July 2023, arguing that obstacles to its own exports hadn't been lifted.

Russia targeted Ukrainian ports on the Danube in late July, following the Black Sea Grain Initiative's collapse on July 17.

This left Ukraine unable to safely export from its Black Sea ports, lifting wheat prices on the CME by nearly 5% shortly after the news broke.

Mintec has learned that there are significant concerns that shipping in the Black Sea region may become exceedingly difficult as market participants have expressed reluctance to sell Cost, Insurance, and Freight (CIF) in the Black Sea/Azov region.

Following the suspension of the grain deal, Ukraine has been utilizing a Black Sea export corridor to renew some of its seaborne exports. Ukrainian ports continue to be subject to Russian attacks, raising uncertainty about trade flows to and from the region going forward. [UB](#)

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Innovative marketing strategies in the seafood industry

The seafood industry is witnessing a revolution in marketing strategies aimed at expanding its reach while broadening the palate of the consumer. From packaging innovations to celebrity endorsements, these efforts are successfully making seafood a more attractive choice for consumers.

INFLUENCER MARKETING CAMPAIGNS

The seafood industry is tapping into the power of influencer marketing to reach new audiences. By partnering with celebrity chefs, professional athletes, and lifestyle influencers, brands are showcasing the versatility and health benefits of seafood through authentic, relatable content. These collaborations often result in creative recipes and cooking tips, making seafood more approachable to consumers who might otherwise be intimidated by cooking fish. Influencer campaigns are particularly effective on social media platforms, where visual appeal and personal testimonials can significantly influence consumer preferences and behaviors.

Genuine Alaska Pollock Producers (GAPP) partnering with celebrity Chef Antonia Lofaso, athlete AJ Pollock

Lofaso is also a key figure in GAPP's "Always On" social media campaign in the U.S. creating engaging and educational content about wild Alaska pollock. Lofaso expressed enthusiasm for continuing her partnership with GAPP, citing Wild Alaska Pollock as a versatile and nutritious ingredient ideal for family meals.

Leveraging AJ Pollock's extensive fanbase and media presence within the MLB, the partnership is logical and strategic, considering AJ Pollock's namesake connection with the fish and his ability to engage a wide audience emphasizing the connection between his personal values, the values of the industry, and the appeal of wild Alaska pollock.

Premier Catch partnering with WNBA and NWSL athletes

With an impressive lineup, athletes from both the WNBA and NWSL—including Alysha Clark (WNBA), Layshia Clarendon (WNBA), Breanna Stewart (WNBA), Olivia Moultrie (NWSL) and Jess Fishlock (NWSL) —showcase how sports and nutrition can synergistically work together to promote healthier eating choices. The athletes' involvement may also help in breaking down barriers or misconceptions about seafood, making it more accessible and appealing to a wider range of consumers. It's a strategic move by seafood e-commerce platform Premier Catch, highlighting the importance of innovative marketing approaches in the competitive food industry.

SKIN PACKS FOR ENHANCED PRODUCT DISPLAY

Innovative packaging like skin packs is being increasingly used to enhance the visual appeal of seafood products. These vacuum-sealed packages not only maintain product freshness, but also provide clear, eye-catching displays that boost impulse purchases



Pacific Seafood's product display at Seafood Expo North America 2023 as photographed by Urner Barry.

in retail environments. This aesthetic appeal is crucial in the seafood industry, where freshness is paramount. The clear packaging allows consumers to view the product in its entirety, assuring them of its quality.

Beyond aesthetics, skin pack packaging offers practical benefits. It ensures food safety by reducing exposure to air and contaminants, thus extending the product's shelf life. Additionally, this method results in less waste, both in terms of product spoilage and packaging materials. Less waste is not only beneficial for the environment but also for retailers and consumers, as it contributes to more efficient distribution and variety in seafood availability.

RESURGENCE OF TINNED SEAFOOD

Tinned seafood is undergoing a modern transformation. Brands are embracing fun, contemporary packaging designs and marketing strategies, shifting the perception of tinned seafood from a basic pantry item to a trendy, accessible form of luxury where people are increasingly incorporating tinned fish into their meals, notably on charcuterie boards.

Driven by social media platforms like TikTok, this shift is particularly appealing to younger consumers who value both convenience and aesthetics where videos showcase colorful cans of fish, leading consumers to explore and share their experiences with various tinned fish products.

The appeal of tinned fish lies in its affordability, convenience, and unique flavors including vegan alternatives and subscription services, with restaurants and specialty stores embracing the trend. The decorative designs on the tins add to the appeal, making them popular as souvenirs.



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The seafood industry's innovative marketing strategies represent a significant shift in how seafood is perceived and consumed. The adoption of visually appealing skin packs, the resurgence of tinned seafood with modern packaging, and the strategic use of influencer marketing campaigns are collectively broadening the appeal of seafood products. These efforts are not only enhancing the industry's reach but are also changing consumer habits and perceptions. Partnerships with prominent figures like celebrity chefs and professional athletes further amplify the message, connecting the health benefits of seafood with wider lifestyle and wellness trends. As these marketing strategies continue to evolve, they pave the way for seafood to become a more integral part of the modern consumer's diet, blending tradition with innovation to create a dynamic and promising future for the industry. This transformation, driven by both aesthetic appeal and practical benefits, positions seafood as a versatile, nutritious, and appealing choice for a diverse and growing consumer base. [UB](#)

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The evolving campaigns for marketing pork

From the day we saw Mikey bravely decide to try the cereal that none of his friends would dare to try, to Clara Peller muttering “Where’s the beef;” creative marketing campaigns have been at the core of top-of-mind awareness for food products for millions of consumers. However, much strategy goes into creative campaigns like the ones mentioned above.

At the core of each successful campaign, it’s the existence of key elements such as identifying goals, target audience demographics, and engaging messaging, that is the vehicle of communicating your strategy effectively.

As of the writing of this article, we are currently in the midst of another pork month celebration; a time when the industry strives to highlight the nutritional benefits and versatility of pork as an all-around family-friendly protein choice. Historically, pork has faced a number of challenges throughout the years in positioning itself as a viable cost-effective option for consumers’ protein consumption. Recent increases in beef prices have not necessarily converted into an increase in pork movement at the retail level. By creatively highlighting varying options

available as well as cross selling between processed and fresh options, a long-term demand strategy could be supported that may impact retail demand and ultimately more sales.



Don't be blah.

Perhaps one of most recognizable pork market campaigns to date has been the positioning of pork as *The Other White Meat*®. The campaign which garnered significant top-of mind awareness within consumers, ran for 24 years and was backed up by multiple, print and TV ads through 2011 before research determined that marketing needed to go in a different direction. Research found that based on consumer feedback, pork may be more complicated to prepare than other options at the time. As of 2011, the new slogan became *Pork®: Be Inspired*®. This challenged consumers to rethink the way they prepare meals, and the campaign remains active today, featuring a designated website providing cooking tips to prepare a variety of meals.

During the most recent USDA Hogs & Pigs report webinar, Senior VP of Strategy and Domestic Market Development



Kiersten Hafer, revealed a two-tiered marketing initiative that featured a penetration strategy consisting of shopper marketing campaigns designed to impact the consumer at the time of purchase. Hafer also introduced brand driven programs establishing a demand driven strategy based on familiarity, while exposing consumers to items that may not be as mainstream as others. Based on her comments, the overall strategy does not just focus on more sales like preceding campaigns, but to introduce a more diversified strategy moving forward. Furthermore, educating the consumer on creative uses for pork outside of its typical center of plate role will result in familiarity and confidence in preparing the product.

Besides the efforts of the National Pork Board in strategically promoting pork, other regional organizations are also pitching in with creative promotions of their own. The most recent Hamann Bacon/Iowa State football team collaboration designed to promote additional consumption in the state of Iowa serves as a great example of the diversification centered around education, occurring in many channels to position pork as a more progressive option by comparison to your grandparents' generation. [UB](#)

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Braised Pork Chops with Peppers and Onions

INGREDIENTS
 4 boneless pork loin chops, about 1-inch thick, trimmed
 2 tsp olive oil
 Salt and pepper
 1 tbsp tomato paste
 2 small red or yellow bell peppers, quartered and cut into 1/4-inch slices
 1 small red or yellow onion, halved and cut into 1/4-inch slices
 4 cloves garlic, thinly sliced
 1/2 c. dry red wine (can substitute chicken or vegetable broth)

DIRECTIONS
 Warm oil in large nonstick skillet over medium heat. Season chops with salt and pepper; cook until browned, 3-4 minutes per side. Remove chops and set aside.
 Add tomato paste to skillet and cook, stirring, for 15 seconds. Add peppers and onion to skillet; season with salt and pepper. Cook, stirring occasionally, until vegetables start to brown, about 3 minutes. Add garlic and cook, stirring occasionally, for 1 minute.
 Add wine and bring to a boil, scraping up and stirring in any browned bits in the skillet. Return chops to skillet, nestle them in the liquid and reduce to a simmer. Cover and cook 4 minutes. Turn chops, cover, and cook until internal temperature reaches 160°F.
 Serve with pepper and onion mixture on top of pork.
 Serves 4

With pork, there's so much you can do. From skillet to second helpings, pork lets you put your own spin on delicious. Find your next inspiring recipe at PorkBeInspired.com

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Weather's IMPACT On The Plate

A procurement unit guide
from the team at  Mintec

In the dynamic and ever-changing landscape of food production and across the supply chain, staying attuned to extreme weather patterns is not just a matter of curiosity; **it's a strategic imperative.**

THE IMPACT OF WEATHER ANOMALIES ON AGRI-FOOD PROCUREMENT

The impact of weather anomalies on crops is as diverse as the commodities themselves, and procurement leaders in this industry should be acutely aware of the implications. This guide is your compass through the world of weather anomalies and their profound influence on the agri-food industry.

THE CRUCIAL ROLE OF DATA AND WEATHER TRACKING











Extreme weather data tracking is critical for agri-food procurement leaders. Different weather anomalies affect crops like wheat, corn, and coffee uniquely, impacting production and yield. Monitoring weather events in key growing regions is essential for risk management and strategic planning, ensuring stable supply chains and improved profit margins.

Various crops, such as wheat, corn, soybeans, coffee, sugar, and more, are vulnerable to distinct weather patterns. Droughts can shrivel up wheat fields, while excessive rainfall can flood corn crops. Extended heatwaves can stunt soybean growth, and unpredictable frost events can devastate coffee plantations. These unpredictable scenarios can lead to fluctuating production and yield levels, creating a ripple effect throughout the agri-food supply chain.





Weather Events

-  ● Wildfires
-  ● Hurricanes
-  ● Tornadoes
-  ● Derecho
-  ● Drought
-  ● Harmattan Winds
-  ● Med Drought
-  ● Indian Monsoon
-  ● Indian Ocean Cyclones
-  ● Typhoons

HOW CAN TRACKING THIS MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

By anticipating and responding to weather-related challenges, procurement leaders can mitigate potential disruptions, reduce wastage, and maintain stable pricing, ultimately ensuring the consistent supply of quality products to their markets.

Extreme weather data tracking directly impacts the agri-food industry's bottom line and operational efficiency. Procurement leaders who prioritize this are better equipped to manage costs, reduce disruptions, and optimize their supply chains in the face of unpredictable weather, leading to improved financial performance and smoother operations.



Risk Mitigation

Weather tracking helps procurement leaders anticipate and prepare for weather-related disruptions, reducing supply chain and operations risks.



Informed Decision-Making

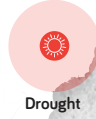
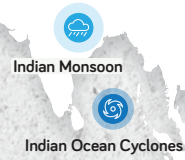
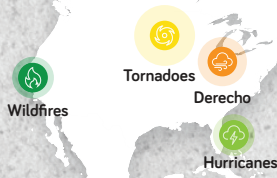
Access to weather data enables data-driven decisions, optimizing procurement strategies and logistics.



Cost Reduction

Efficient weather monitoring minimizes resource wastage and enhances cost control in agri-food procurement.

Continued on page 16



WEATHER'S IMPACT

Continued from page 15

RECURRING WEATHER EVENTS

Storms, drought, monsoons, wildfires... how do these impact crops?

Using Mintec's extensive data and analysis on extreme weather, this map shows where the most common weather events often take place, when during the year these are typically experienced, and which crops are most impacted per region. Use this to help plan your purchasing schedule throughout the year.

MAJOR COMMODITIES IMPACTED

NORTH AMERICA	SOUTH AMERICA	EUROPE	AFRICA
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WINE GRAPES CITRUS CORN SPRING WHEAT SOYBEAN COTTON PECANS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> COFFEE SUGAR SOYBEAN 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> OLIVES WHEAT WINTER BARLEY 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> COCOA CASHEWS
SOUTH ASIA	SOUTH EAST ASIA	EAST ASIA	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RICE PEANUT COTTON BANANAS CHILLI MANGO 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RICE COCONUT SUGAR 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RICE WHEAT CORN 	

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HOW CAN MINTEC HELP?

World-leading analysts at Mintec have created the following services within the Mintec platform to help procurement leaders and teams weather the weather, better.

Historical Insights for Informed Procurement

Gain historical data and insights to anticipate crop quality and quantity, based on past performance, helping you make informed decisions.

Market Stability Assessment

Understand market stability by assessing potential supply challenges, pricing fluctuations, and disruptions, allowing you to proactively address these issues.

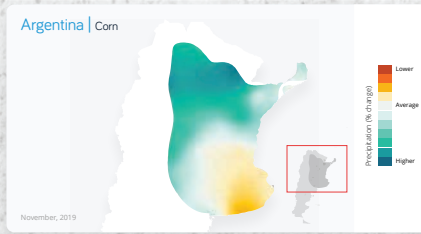
Global Crop Impact Overview

Receive concise monthly reports summarizing the impact of adverse weather conditions on crops worldwide ensuring a comprehensive understanding on the global market.

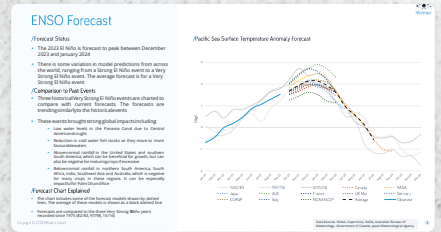
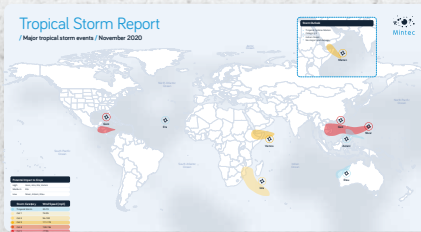
Condensed, In-Depth Information

Access all the relevant information in one place featuring detailed coverage of various weather patterns, such as storms, droughts, and heat, equipping you with insights into the quality, availability, and pricing trends of commodities.

COMPREHENSIVE WEATHER ANALYSIS



MONTHLY WEATHER REPORTS



Negotiation-Ready Data

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The intriguing world of canned pink salmon

In the protein landscape, few options marry history, nutrition, and convenience as well as canned pink salmon. A testament to innovation and preservation, canned pink salmon offers many benefits to modern consumers while charting an exciting trajectory into the future.

THE BACK STORY

The roots of canned pink salmon begin in the Pacific Northwest in the waters around Alaska and British Columbia in the 19th century; a time when canning techniques were rapidly evolving to meet the growing demand for preserved seafood. Pink salmon, known for its mild flavor and tender texture, soon emerged as a preferred choice for canning; the beginnings of tradition that would thrive for generations.



©Billy F Blume Jr / Shutterstock.com

The process enabled the preservation of pinks in a convenient and sustainable manner, making it accessible even in distant regions. As canning technology advanced, it not only extended the shelf life, but also managed to retain more of the essential nutrients, turning it into a viable source of nutrition for communities far and wide.

While the inaugural canning of salmon occurred in Scotland in 1824, it wasn't until 1878 that the process reached Alaska. But by 1936, Alaska alone produced approximately 18 million cases annually. Canned pink salmon played a crucial role in World War I, providing a reliable source of sustenance for the troops due to its easy transport, extended shelf life, and essential nutrients. Similarly, in World War II it fed and nourished troops but also became indispensable on the home front, efficiently managing resources during rationing while offering a nutritious option for civilians as well.

HOW MUCH NUTRITION CAN YOU PACK INTO A CAN?

Unbeknownst to many consumers, the canning process involves only fresh fish with some added salt, making it an incredibly natural choice. While you can find some products produced skinless and boneless, traditional canned pink salmon, cherished globally for its flavor and nutrient rich content, typically includes both skin and bones.

Canned pink salmon emerges as a nutritional powerhouse, delivering high-quality protein and omega-3 fatty acids, beneficial to heart health and cognitive function. Recent studies, published in *Pain Management Nursing Journal*, even link omega-3LCs to pain relief and improved psychoneurological symptoms in breast cancer survivors. Packed with many other essential vitamins and minerals, including vitamin D, B12, and potassium, canned pink salmon proves to be a well rounded addition to a balanced diet.

What really separates canned pink salmon from many alternatives is its low saturated fat and calorie content, making it ideal for those looking to manage weight as well as maintaining a nutrient rich diet. Its convenience and versatility make it a great choice for incorporating into various dishes, effortlessly adding a nutritional boost.

HEADING TOWARDS A BRIGHT FUTURE

According to Jeremy Woodrow, Executive Director of the Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute (ASMI), canned salmon provides stability and value, with the shelf-stable product boasting a small carbon footprint and high nutritional value. Advances in the industry over the past few decades, including refrigeration on boats and numerous innovations in processing plants, have elevated the quality of canned salmon.

Looking ahead, Woodrow envisions a bright future, emphasizing ongoing collaborations with researchers and chefs to promote canned salmon.

"There's some really interesting and inventive things being done by a lot of companies currently," said Woodrow.

The future of canned pink salmon appears promising. Given the current emphasis on health and wellness in the marketplace, demand for salmon is on the rise. As more and more people prioritize eco-friendly choices, pink stands out for its abundance and sustainable harvesting practices. Consumers are becoming more aware of the importance of adding seafood to their diets, making canned pink salmon a perfect choice.

The journey of canned pink salmon, from a preservation necessity to a celebrated protein source, is a story of resilience and adaptability. Its heritage, nutritional benefits, and sustainable future establish it as a protein-rich delight that continues to enrich diets and tantalize tastebuds around the globe. Moving ahead, canned pink salmon is poised to maintain its place as a nutritional gem in the ever-changing world of protein consumption. [UB](#)

Article contributed by **Joshua Bickert** | jbickert@urnerbarry.com

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Gauging beef and pork supplies in 2024

2023 was a year characterized by extreme financial losses for the nation's hog producers.

The average return to farrow to finish operations in the first half of the year was minus \$34.64 per head, based on research from Iowa State University (ISU). Producers experienced a brief period of profitability over the summer but faced losses once again by the fourth quarter.

The steep losses gripping the hog industry have prompted herd liquidation efforts since at least this spring, said livestock dealers. USDA's national weighted average for negotiated hogs was \$72.45/per cwt in October, nearly 20% below the year prior.

Negative returns are likely spurring additional liquidation efforts this fall and winter. This could tighten U.S. hog availability starting in the spring of 2024. However, the overall outlook for 2024 looks bleak, with Iowa State University forecasting an average annual loss of \$18 per head next year.

If realized, 2023 and 2024 will be the worst two-year stretch for hog production profitability in history, surpassing the losses seen between 1998-1999 that resulted from an imbalance of supplies for the available processing capacity.

While feed costs have eased considerably from year-ago levels, lackluster wholesale values relative to recent years and large hog supplies have pulled negotiated cash hog prices below producers' breakeven levels.

Urner Barry's pork carcass cutout value trended below 2021-2022 levels in 2023, which some analysts attribute to slowed demand. After reaching an annual peak in July, the cutout was pulled lower by declining prices for items like bellies, hams, and trim.

The USDA September USDA Hogs and Pigs indicated that the nation's hog inventory was slightly above year ago levels. The quarterly data suggested that producers intend to limit future output, with a 1.2% year-over-year (YOY) decline reported in the breeding herd and a 2.9% YOY decline in farrowing intentions for June-August.

Notably, the number of pigs per litter for June-August was at 11.61 head, up 4.3% from a year ago and a record high. The jump in sow productivity will largely offset these smaller farrowing intentions, leading to concerns about continued large supplies in the near term.

The nation's sow herd suffered significant losses in 2020 and 2021 due to rampant porcine reproductive and respiratory syndrome (PRRS) outbreaks. Disease pressure has since slowed, contributing to a rebound in pork production.

Through November 11, year-to-date (YTD) pork production and hog slaughter was 0.3% and 1.5% higher, respectively, than 2022.

Challenging industry conditions have also reduced pork production in Europe and in Canada. China, a key trade partner, continues to contend with African swine fever complications, which devastated its hog herd in 2018 and has since become endemic.

With producers in other areas of the world exiting the business because of unprofitable conditions, global pork supplies could become tight in the longer term.

'Til the cows come home...

Beef industry participants could talk 'til the cows come home about the tight supply situation, the result of four plus years of drought-induced herd liquidation.

The nation's cattle herd grew to a peak of 94.8 million head in 2019 following a seven-year liquidation that ended in 2014. By January 2023, the nation's herd decreased by 6% to 89.3 million head—a 61-year-low.

Reduced cattle availability pushed cash cattle prices to record territory in 2023. USDA's five area direct live steer averaged \$160.55/cwt in Q1 and \$178.28/cwt in Q2, both at seasonal record highs for their respective time periods.

Returns for producers expanded too, with returns for finishing steer calves jumping from \$144.10 per head in Q2 to \$325.56 per head in Q3, based on research from ISU.



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“The steep financial losses gripping the hog industry have prompted herd liquidation efforts since at least this spring.”

Higher cattle prices and a sharp YOY decline in beef production propelled Urner Barry's Choice and Select wholesale beef cutout values to record or near record highs for much of 2023, lifting retail beef prices into uncharted territory as well.

A sharp rise in input costs compressed beef packer margins into negative territory by the third quarter despite packers' efforts to scale back on production. YTD beef production and cattle slaughter through November 11 were down by 5.3% and 4.7%, respectively, compared to 2022.

Lackluster marketing rates are raising concerns about large near-term supplies. According to the USDA, the number of cattle in U.S. feedyards as of October 1 was 100.6% of a year ago, the second highest level for that date since the data series began in 1996.

September placements were up 6.1% from a year ago, 4.5% above the average guess of analysts participating in the Urner Barry survey. Ongoing drought, lower corn prices, and a surge in feeder

cattle imports from Mexico may have contributed to the jump in placements, which could translate to larger than anticipated supplies in the first half of 2024.



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“In the long run, cattle supplies may remain thin over the next several years.”

Marketings for September were reported at 89.4% of the year-ago figure, extending the run of months to four in which marketings have been under the previous year dating back to June.

In the long run, cattle supplies may remain thin over the next several years. USDA's World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates report for October pegged 2024 beef production at 25.810 billion pounds, down about 4% from 2023.

Ranchers overall have been hesitant to rebuild the herd due to headwinds including persistent drought and limited forage availability. Herd rebuilding could be a slow process, depending in part on the weather going forward. [UB](#)

Article contributed by Courtney Shum | cshum@urnerbarry.com



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Bird flu, strong retail demand send egg prices soaring... *but will consumers see it?*

After more than five weeks of no change, the shell-egg market began its seasonal ascent in the penultimate week of October, as it often does, on a combination of strengthening retail demand and mounting confidence in the lead-up to Thanksgiving. Days later, that upward momentum got kicked into overdrive, following reports that the bird flu had broken out on a commercial layer farm for the first time in 11 months.

Highly-pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) began making a resurgence among commercial turkey flocks in the early part of October but had managed to evade commercial egg layers since December 2022. However, that all changed on Halloween when a 940,000-layer operation in Minnesota tested positive for the virus. While the number of chickens lost represented a mere 0.3% of the nation's total production at that time, it triggered an immediate impact in the marketplace—spooking both buyers and sellers alike.

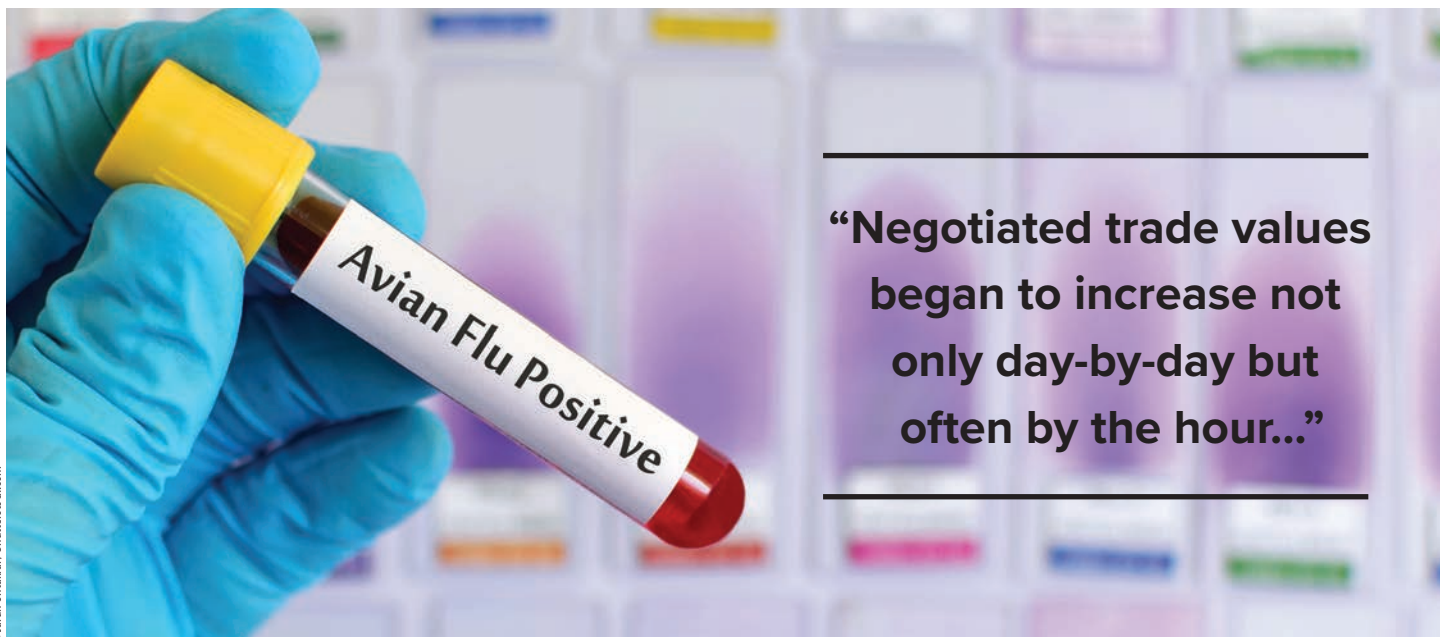
In the days that followed, spot market buying interest ramped up considerably—particularly among buyers further downstream, many of whom were caught off guard by the sudden turn of events and now scrambling to cover short positions. At the same time, offers—which were already scarce to being with—all but vanished from the marketplace amid amplified risk and uncertainty going into the year's strongest demand period. Negotiated trade values began to increase not only day-by-day but often by the hour—a good many of them confirmed above Urner Barry's market quotations rather than the typical “back-of-market” relationship, leading to a precipitous rise in the market.

By November 7, prices had surged 60cts to \$1.93/dozen—the highest values recorded since April. Though it's commonplace to see prices increase at this time of year, the size of the gains far surpassed the norm. Over the past five years, prices rose at an average of 33% in the four weeks leading

up to Thanksgiving. Meanwhile, in less than two weeks' time—and with another two weeks left until Thanksgiving—prices had already spiked 45%.

Then, in the second week of November, spot market bidding started to accelerate in both volume and value—suggesting that perhaps this rally was being driven more by fundamentals than emotion, after all. The quantity of loads sought after in public trade climbed to as many as 175—tying the all-time record and outpacing the number of offers by more than 12 to 1. Urner Barry's benchmark Midwest large quotation went on to increase another 27%—85% in total—ending the Friday before Thanksgiving at a seven-month high of \$2.46/dozen.

It seemed early in the rally that perhaps would-be sellers were holding product—some in search of better value, others out of fear that they would eventually need to buy it back at a higher price. But even after the sharp rise in market values, suppliers



“Negotiated trade values began to increase not only day-by-day but often by the hour...”

were still struggling to get their needs met, to the extent that some were forced to push or outright cancel orders. Part of the issue was that many of the producers that are often able to co-pack for others were now buyers themselves given the strength of their own retail orders—many of which were outperforming seasonal projections.

Grocers attempting to build up inventories to meet heightened holiday demand were facing headwinds, as aggressive everyday price points were helping to facilitate strong retail clearance rates—and, in turn, replenishment needs. USDA data shows that the nationally advertised price for Grade A large or better averaged just \$1.25/dozen in the four weeks ending November 16—an attractive price point under any circumstance let alone in this economic environment, where consumers continue to battle high food inflation.

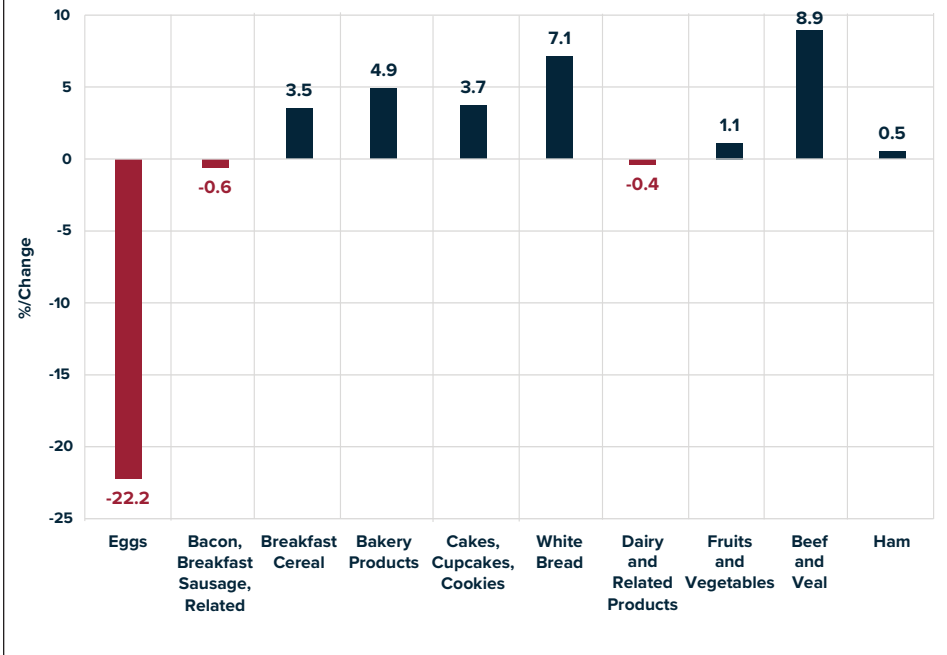
The Consumer Price Index from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics shows that egg prices in the year through October fell 22.2%—the strongest decline among all food items. That compares with a 2.1% increase in the overall cost of food at home and is a real standout against competing items in the breakfast category, like cereal and bakery products, which were up 3.5% and 4.9% in the year through October, respectively.

Whether retailers continue to offer eggs at such low prices or pass rising wholesale costs on to consumers remains to be seen, however—as does the longer-term implication on the market. Ordinarily, high prices cure high prices by slowing demand. But, as we saw at this time last year, that mechanism fails when consumers are shielded from wholesale market gains. Even as the bird flu was spreading and prices were soaring, retailers continued to use eggs as a loss leader. Efforts to keep eggs affordable, however altruistic in nature, simply fuels more consumption—further skewing the supply-and-demand balance, rather than correcting it. [UB](#)

Article contributed by Karyn Rispoli-Pardue
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Consumer Price Index: Unadjusted % Change October 2022-2023

Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics



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ONE AUSTRALIAN COMPANY EXPANDS FROM ABALONE TO UNDERWATER WINE

Underwater wine, anyone? *It's not just for mermaids!*

Aging wine underwater has been trending for quite a few years now. However, a recent partnership between Rare Foods Australia and a French company called Winereef International has caught the attention of both vino and seafood lovers.

Rare Foods Australia formerly did business as Ocean Grown Abalone. Known as the world's first commercial abalone ranch and for producing Greenlip Abalone, the company underwent a rebranding in 2021 in an effort to introduce new products and grow the business. And one of those businesses just so happens to involve ocean cellaring.

Underwater aging of wine is illegal in the U.S. In fact, two California winemakers were just convicted in August 2023 for illegally depositing metal cages of wine on the ocean floor off the Santa Barbara coast. But it's not illegal in Australia!

Prior to the rebrand, Rare Foods Australia conducted some successful ocean cellaring trials in 2020 with their Ocean Signature process. The Ocean Signature Process involves the "placement of wine in securely sealed glass bottles in crates on the seabed for up to 12 months." The name stems from the exterior of each bottle developing a "one-of-a-kind external

"...the company has 2,300 Ocean Signature bottles harvested and ready for sale with a price tag of \$220 per bottle."



Photos provided by Rare Foods Australia

Ocean Signature from marine life such as corals, coralline red algae, oysters, tube worms” and more. According to the company, when the bottle is dried the “encrusted remains of the natural marine growth give the bottles a unique and appealing look with an attractive marketing advantage.”

This first venture into ocean cellaring for Rare Foods Australia involved a strategic partnership with Glenarty Road and Edwards wineries. And as of November 2023 the company has 2,300 Ocean Signature bottles harvested and ready for sale with a price tag of \$220 per bottle. But now Rare Foods Australia is ready to dive a little deeper. Enter Winereef.

Rare Foods Australia announced in October 2023 that they entered into a Heads of Agreement with Winereef for a commercial trial of the Winereef technology on the Flinders Bay lease that will be split 50/50. As part of this partnership, 5,300 litres of wine (20 vats each holding 265 litres) sourced from the Margaret River region will be used in the trial of the Winereef ocean cellared method. Winereef will provide their starter kit, which contains the material needed for the trial, and the company will also offer their technical expertise in selecting the starter wines, setting up the method and operating the physical trial. Meanwhile, Rare Foods Australia will be in charge of installing, maintaining, monitoring and retrieving the Winereef ocean cellared products. Once the trial is up the wine will be delivered to a wine processing facility for bottling, blending, labeling, storage and distribution.

All together the trial, which will begin in 2024, is expected to deliver up to 13,000 bottles of ocean cellared wine. So get ready to pop that cork. [UB](#)

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Scan the QR code to listen to Rare Foods Australia CEO Rob Jordan on the SeafoodNews Podcast, where he talks about the company's ocean ranching of MSC-certified Greenlip abalone and their recent venture into ocean cellaring.



After decade-old WTO fight, India cuts frozen turkey, duck tariffs

On September 11, 2023, U.S. Trade Representative Katherine Tai announced that India had agreed to reduce tariffs on frozen turkey and ducks from 30% to 5%, along with other U.S. agricultural products. This ends the last major trade dispute between the two nations, potentially opening a sizable export market for American producers.

The announcement came after President Joe Biden's meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the G20 Summit in New Delhi. The National Turkey Federation actively worked with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, and key leaders in Congress to prioritize reducing India's tariffs. The reduced tariffs provide meaningful new access for U.S. exporters to sell turkey and duck in India's rapidly growing market, which has seen increasing demand for protein-rich foods.

"The Indian market responded positively, with upticks in inquiries for U.S. items like non-bovine-fed turkey, turkey breast, smoked turkey breast, duck breast and duck legs," a spokesperson for the USA Poultry & Egg Export Council (USAPEEC) told *Urnner Barry's Reporter*. The council expects higher visibility for these products in Indian restaurants and catering following the tariff cuts. "There is interest from the processing industry in India for developing value-added products for retail and food and beverage," the spokesperson added.

The agreement caps a decade-long trade dispute that began in 2012 when the U.S. challenged India's avian flu-related ban on American poultry imports at the World Trade Organization. Although India lifted the ban in 2015, it maintained high tariffs that restricted U.S. poultry access to the Indian market.

Following the news, Indian farmer and trade groups expressed concerns about potential dumping of unwanted U.S. poultry. According to The Hindu newspaper, some said they will appeal

to the Indian Supreme Court, further arguing U.S. poultry may use meat and bone meal containing beef and pork byproducts—a religiously sensitive issue.

"A requirement negotiated for market access is that birds must be fed with bovine-free feed. Plants eligible to export can self-certify on company letterhead that birds 'were not fed with feeds containing materials of internal organs, blood meal and tissue of bovine origin. A USDA APHIS Veterinarian must sign the certification," said USAPEEC Director of Global Marketing Leah Mulcahy.

The tariff deal signals a more cooperative U.S.-India relationship. Responding to India's domestic industry concerns, USAPEEC said that the organization has successfully partnered with local poultry

“The Indian market responded positively, with upticks in inquiries for U.S. items like non-bovine-fed turkey, turkey breast, smoked turkey breast, duck breast and duck legs...”



associations in other countries to jointly promote overall consumption growth. They cited previous collaborations in Mexico, Central America, and Colombia as models for expanding India's still underdeveloped poultry market in a manner benefiting both U.S. exporters and domestic players.

Hoping to reassure Indian producers, USAPEEC stressed that turkey and duck breeding within India remains limited to small backyard farms.

"Differentiating U.S. poultry products through quality or specialty items can alleviate dumping fears. Both are considered luxury products and not a competitor to domestic chicken. Turkey and duck target distribution channels are mainly comprised of supermarkets and hypermarkets. They are also available at hotel chains and specialty restaurants in India," Mulcahy emphasized.

While tariff reductions represent progress, other hurdles remain in accessing India's market. They point to potential non-tariff barriers like stringent sanitary standards and phytosanitary (SPS) requirements, foreign food manufacturer facilities approval and last-mile cold-chain logistic challenges. USAPEEC further added, "future developments focus on easing tariff barriers/ tariff rate quota (TRQ) for chicken parts, similar to the concessions made for turkey and duck, to capitalize fully on the Indian market potential."

With the middle class boom, India's poultry market, currently standing at \$30 billion, is expected to reach \$61 billion by 2032, according to a report by EMR. But India still remains protein deficient, with 73% of the population deficient according to a survey. Speaking on joint ventures between U.S. and Indian firms to help grow the pie for both sides, USAPEEC said, "collaborations and joint ventures in sharing best practices, technology, and other knowledge share remain instrumental in growing the consumption in the Indian market for domestic and U.S. poultry products." [UB](#)

Article contributed by Vivek Patil
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Photos provided by USAPEEC



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The landscape of the U.S. lamb market



Both domestic and imported lamb, which are typically most popular in white tablecloth establishments, have trended well historically in Q4 ahead of the Thanksgiving and Christmas holiday. With extended family and friends getting together more often than not during these months and opting for foodservice options around the actual holidays, items like lamb rib racks typically see a gain. However, this year is seeing some atypical price action with prices being mostly flat, to at times weaker. The question that begs to be answered is: why?

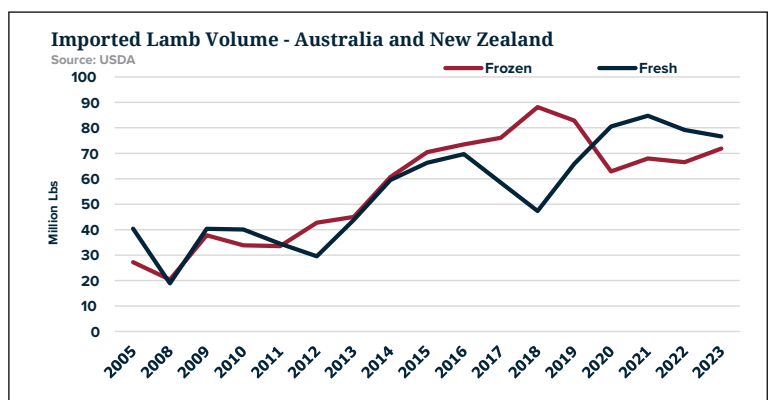
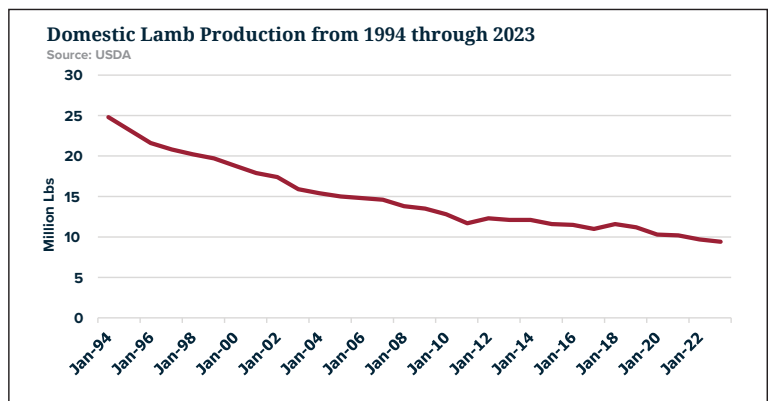
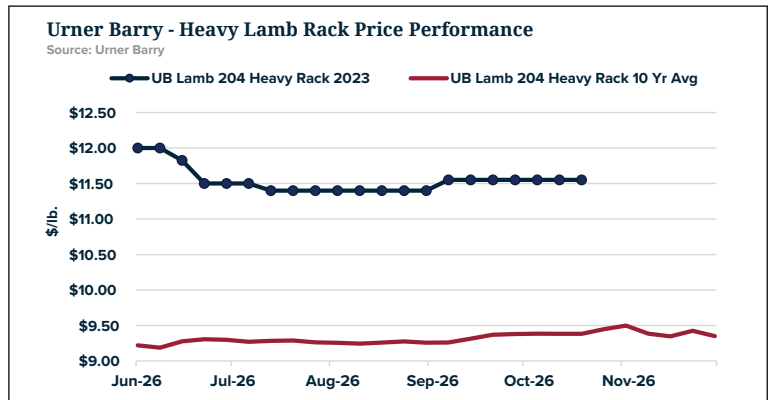
It's no secret that lamb consumption has dropped off in the U.S. over the previous few decades. According to USDA data, lamb consumption per capita has declined from nearly five pounds in the 1960's to roughly one pound at the current day. Most of this relates to preference and the availability of other proteins to consumers. With that said, the production decline rate has been similar to the reduction in consumption with a nearly 62% decrease over the previous 30 years. While consumption per capita and production haven't decreased at the exact same levels at the same times, a general sense of "stability" to wholesale lamb prices has been generally seen over the years with one not outpacing the other in any meaningful fashion. However, with the increase in imported lamb volumes into the U.S. over the previous decade, that has begun to change.

Australia and New Zealand have continuously increased the amount of both fresh and frozen lamb items that are being sent into the U.S. For fresh product, these two countries have nearly doubled the amount of fresh product being brought in since 2005, while that figure is 5.5 times that for frozen product. What this suggests is that over the years, domestic lamb pricing in the U.S. has struggled enough due to lessened consumer interest, but as more and more product has been imported, additional pressure has been seen.

As we currently sit, domestic heavy lamb racks have trended downward since the summertime, seeing a 3.75% decline to the price point of \$1100/CWT since late June, which is where it sits now. For the same item but imported, the decline has been only 1% in that same time period. It further illustrates that even during peak holiday periods, price gains are currently non-existent. Demand this year is reportedly down versus the amount of product available on the spot market, and thus hindering price action.

The U.S. lamb market sits in a unique position. A once popular protein is being consumed less often, however it's clear that at least participants in Australia and New Zealand see opportunity in the U.S. to continue the import of decent volumes of product. While more product for a market with declining capita per consumption may not fare well for spot market price action, domestic lamb production has largely adjusted to account for this. The holiday season is typically a supportive time for this protein and while that may not be the case this year, participants are surely keeping a close eye on 2024 and what that may bring for the industry. [UB](#)

Article contributed by **Ryan Hojnowski**
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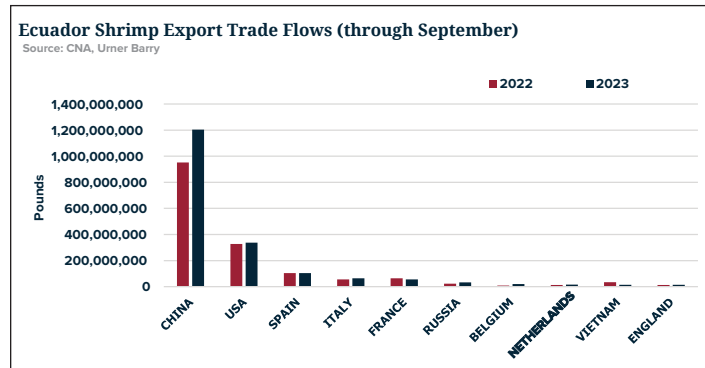
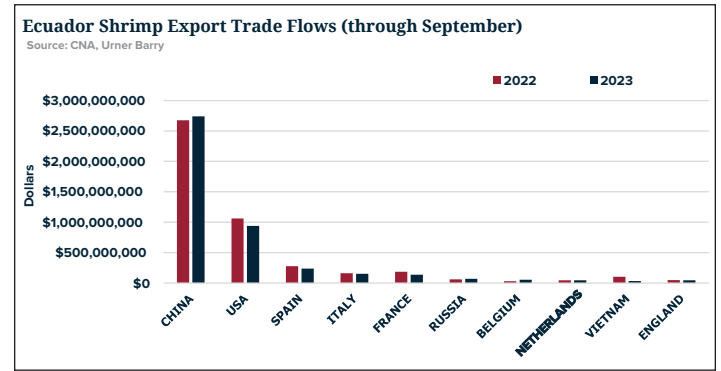
Ecuador shrimp supply growth putting pressure on other producing countries

Ecuador is a South American country of 18 million people that straddles the equator on the west coast of the continent. Their chief exports include crude oil and derivatives, shrimp, bananas, coffee, cut flowers, cocoa, and Panama hats, which they ship to destinations like the United States, Peru, China, Chile, and Panama.

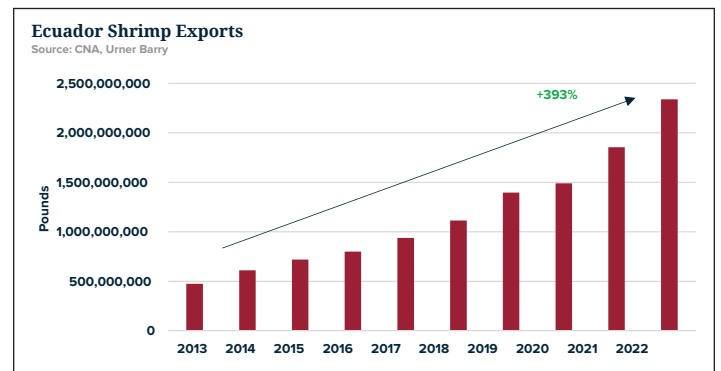
While large-scale shrimp production has been in Ecuador for more than 50 years, it's the growth in the last decade-plus that is remarkable. In fact, in recent years, Ecuador's shrimp industry is the fastest growing major aquaculture industry in the world! Output of vannamei (white leg) shrimp has grown from roughly 200,000 metric tonnes in 2010 to 1.25 million metric tonnes in 2022.

The growth in Ecuador shrimp production doesn't look like it is slowing down anytime soon as the industry there looks to establish dominance globally. Data released from Camara Nacional De Acuicultura (CAN) through September shows a 15% increase in exports over the same period last year despite unfavorable pricing trends.

This was despite the lower market prices seen so far this year. While volume grew over 26% to China, trade dollars grew slightly more than 2% to \$2.741 billion. Nearly the rest of the top 10 showed negative growth year-to-year in the value of trade. Value to the United States dropped over 11% to nearly \$940 million. The only other growth story in value was Belgium, but this represented only 1% of total dollars.



To put this into perspective, Ecuador shrimp exports grew 393% in the last 10 years. This is a CAGR of 17.3%.

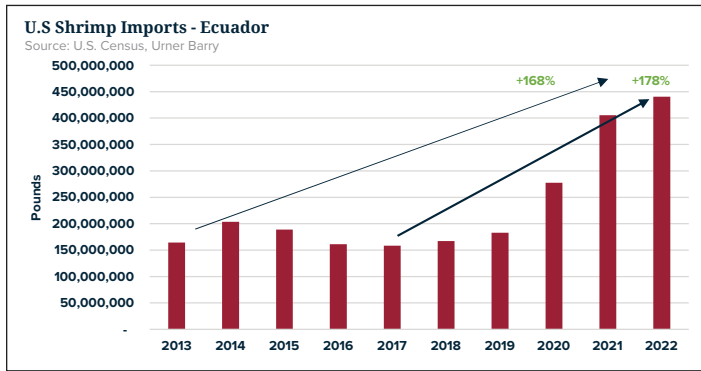


In the first nine months of 2023, Ecuador shipped 912,000 metric tonnes of shrimp to other countries. The top 10 trade partners accounted for 93% of trade with China (60%) and the United States (17%) at 77% of total volume—by far the two biggest single countries. The behemoth China alone has grown over 26% in volume from 431,820 metric tonnes in the same period last year. Trade growth to the United States was a little more muted at 3% from 2022 to 2023. While still at second, the total market share fell slightly. Growth in Europe was driven by smaller players by volume—Italy, Russia, and Belgium.

While a little more muted, Ecuador has looked to become the dominant trade partner with the United States as well, running parallel with trade flows to the Asian markets. While they still trail India when it comes to volume into the United States, they seem to be making a move. If you look at data from 2013, Ecuador ended that year in fourth place, accounting for 74,617 metric tonnes of shrimp shipped to the United States, or nearly 15%. At the trough of 2017, it was still a distant fourth to number one and two India and Indonesia and giving up nearly 400 basis points in market share when it ended that year just under 11%.

MARKET SHARE 2022 vs 2023

	2022	2023		2022	2023
AFRICA	0.53%	0.46%	UNITED STATES	18.71%	16.78%
REST OF AMERICA	2.04%	2.08%	EUROPE	18.14%	17.23%
CHINA	54.48%	59.84%	OCEANÍA	0.06%	0.05%
REST OF ASIA	6.05%	3.56%			

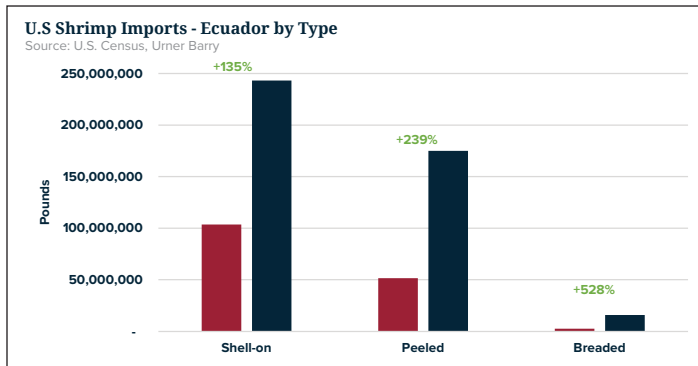


But small increases over the next couple of years were really compounded during the COVID-19 pandemic. With supply chains in peril and shutdowns from major markets, Ecuador found the United States an easy and willing trade partner. Trade

routes were shorter and demand robust. With the continued challenges out of India and more notably Indonesia, Ecuador started to cement themselves with a concentrated effort. At the end of 2022, Ecuador took over spot number two behind India, sending 199,812 metric tonnes, or nearly 24% market share.

And Ecuador seemed to really focus on value-added product that the U.S. consumer demands. The investment in both dollars and human capital for new and expanding value-added shrimp plants was evident through 2023. While shell-on, which includes easy peel, is still the largest category sent to the United States, the growth in peeled and breaded outpaced the former by a significant margin. This signals to the market that the focus is here to stay.

When it comes to a global perspective, Ecuador became the number one supplier of shrimp to the world in 2022. And depending on estimates out of China, the former may even be the top producing country as well. Rabobank analysts estimate Chinese production in two scenarios and the most bullish upwards of two million metric tonnes.



One notable market development is the fact that American Shrimp Processors Association (ASPA) filed trade petitions seeking antidumping duties on imported frozen warmwater shrimp from Ecuador and Indonesia and countervailing duties on imported shrimp from Ecuador, India, Indonesia, and Vietnam.

This development, which was announced on October 25, 2023, may alter future trade flows. At the very least, the next 12 months will be filled with uncertainty as the investigative period is expected to last into the fall of 2024. [UB](#)

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RIBLETS FOR ALL

What is it about riblets that make people go crazy? We all know that McDonald's has a cult following for their McRib. And apparently those that enjoy a plant-based diet have been petitioning MorningStar Farms for years to bring back their vegan riblets. MorningStar's Hickory BBQ Riblets haven't been on shelves since 2018. But this spring they will be making their triumphant return to the frozen aisle.

"You asked. We've answered," said Joe Beauprez, Senior Director of Marketing, Frozen Foods. "Unlike certain fast-food sandwiches, there's nothing 'limited' about this return—Riblets are here to stay."

Flexitarians and vegans alike will be able to enjoy Riblets in two tasty sauces—Sweet BBQ and Korean BBQ. The Riblets, which are packed with 26 grams of protein, come in a convenient, ready to cook and serve tray of two riblets.



Photo credit: MorningStar Farms

FROM THE FIELD TO THE KITCHEN



Travis Kelce is the man to watch right now. The Kansas City Chiefs tight end has made a name for himself on and off the field thanks to his romance with superstar Taylor Swift. And he's not stopping there. The football star has partnered with Golden West Food Group to create a line of refrigerated entrees called Travis Kelce's Kitchen.

Select Walmart stores in the South and East regions are now carrying offerings from Travis Kelce's Kitchen, like Bacon Mac & Cheese, Brisket Burnt Ends & BBQ Sauce, BBQ Baked Beans with Burnt Ends, and Sausage and Meatball Marinara with Peppers and Onions.

"I'm thrilled to partner with Golden West Group for Travis Kelce's Kitchen," said Kelce. "Together we are bringing the heart and soul of Kansas City into every dish."

And whether you're a football fan or a Swiftie, you can indulge in these new retail offerings knowing that each sale is making a difference. Sales support Eighty-Seven & Running, an organization founded by Kelce that provides mentorship, training, motivation and opportunities to underprivileged youth.



Photo credit: Travis Kelce's Kitchen

A CRISPY TRANSFORMATION



The bird is the word—at least according to a recent survey conducted by Louisiana Fish Fry Products. While "Fish" may be in their name, the

leading supplier of Louisiana-inspired breading, batters, boil seasonings, sauces and spices doesn't just limit themselves to seafood. And a survey of more than 2,000 people across the country shows just why... *people love fried chicken!*

79% of those surveyed say that they crave fried chicken at least once a month or more. Two in five even said that they crave it at least once a week, with more than half of those surveyed revealing that they typically eat fried chicken sandwiches two to three times a month or more.

Of course fast food establishments are one way that people are getting their hands on fried chicken sandwiches. But with prices continuing to rise, the survey conducted by Louisiana Fish Fry Products found that more people are looking to prepare fried chicken at home. So this past fall Louisiana Fish Fry Products transformed their packaging—and name—to show people just how easy it is to fry chicken at home. In September the brand's new At Home Seasoned Coating Mixes launched under the name Louisiana Chicken Fry Products. Offerings available include coating mixes for an Original Chicken Sandwich, Mild Chicken Tenders, and Spicy Chicken Wings.

Photo credit: Louisiana Fish Fry Products

A CONVENIENTLY DELICIOUS COLLABORATION

Long gone are the days where you had to sacrifice convenience for taste. Chicken of the Sea has collaborated with McCormick to pack the flavor into their delicious and nutritious wild caught tuna packets. The seafood brand has mastered the on-the-go pouch, which is loaded with lean protein ranging from 11g to 15g.

And now thanks to McCormick, they are elevating the culinary experience with options like Wild Caught Tuna with McCormick Lemon Garlic, Thai Kitchen Sweet & Spicy, and McCormick Dill Tuna Salad.

"Partnering with McCormick to incorporate their mouthwatering flavors with our wild caught, protein-packed tuna in on-the-go packets is the perfect combination," commented Griffin Raasch, Director of Marketing at Chicken of the Sea. "These new, versatile packets will help to provide fans with the taste they crave and nutrients they need to live a happier, healthier life."



Enjoying these offerings are as simple as grabbing a fork and ripping open the packet. [UB](#)

Photo credit: Chicken of the Sea

A woman with long blonde hair and a man with glasses and a beard are shaking hands in a business meeting. The woman is on the left, smiling broadly, and the man is on the right, also smiling. They are both wearing light-colored shirts. The background is a bright, out-of-focus office setting.

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Peso-dollar exchange rate impact on Mexico's bone-in ham pricing

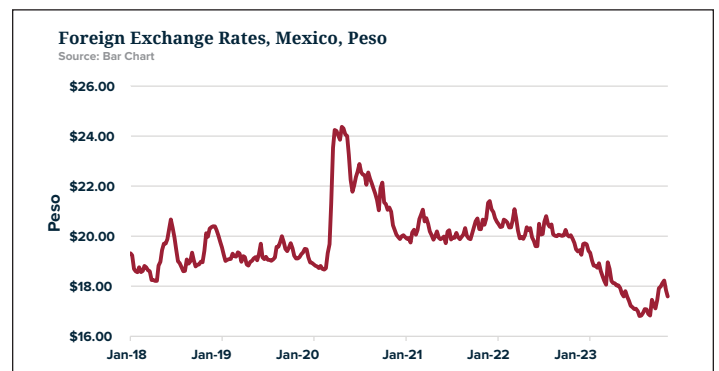
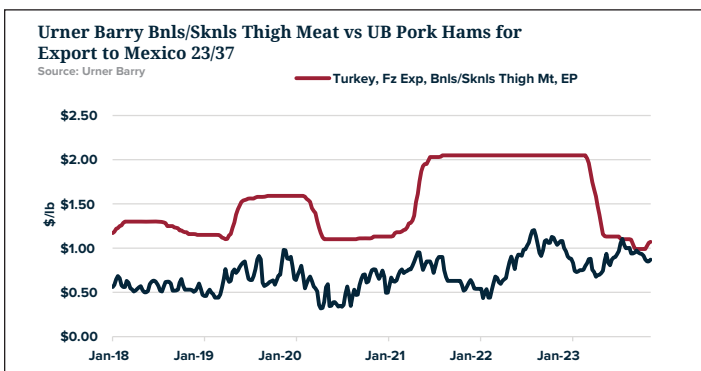
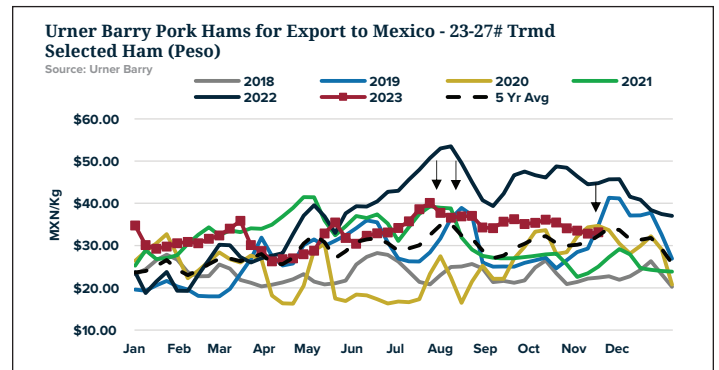
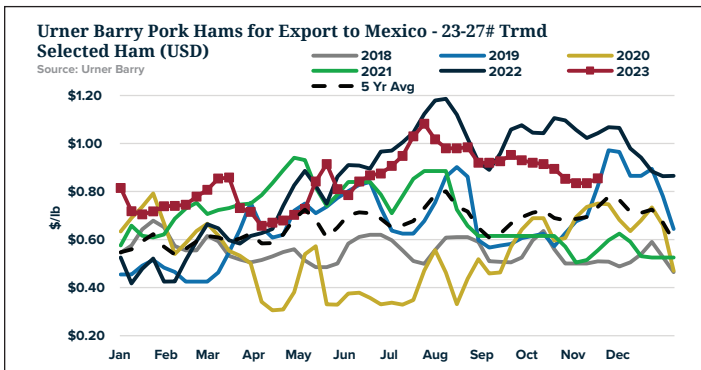
In 2023 the Mexican peso emerged as a symbol of economic resilience, reflecting the country's strong economic growth, political stability, and the draw of favorable interest rate differentials. These factors have not only contributed to the peso's strength but have also enhanced its appeal to investors and traders in the currency and protein markets.

The performance of the peso is linked to various sectors, including agricultural trade, which has been significantly influenced by the currency's strength against the U.S. dollar. Urner Barry Pork Hams for Export to Mexico 23/27 have been particularly sensitive to the shifting exchange rates between the U.S. dollar and the peso. A detailed analysis of the price charts for UB Pork Hams for Export to Mexico 23/27, when viewed in both USD and pesos, reveals a notable divergence. In USD terms, the price trends have remained relatively similar to those of 2022 up until July, then they began trending below 2022 levels, with HPAI not having as large of an impact in 2023 as it did in 2022. However, when priced in pesos, the cost is actually lower than it was in early November 2019, late July 2021, and early November 2022. In contrast, when priced in USD, the 2023 price levels are higher than those of the abovementioned dates.

The favorable exchange rate has been valuable for Mexican buyers, enabling them to procure U.S. pork at more competitive prices, thereby strengthening their position in the market. This is particularly significant given the importance of bone-in hams in Mexico's domestic market, its role in the Mexican labor market, and the use of exporting boneless material to other countries.

The depreciation of the U.S. dollar at the start of 2023 has been a catalyst for increased export demand for U.S. pork. According to the latest USDA report on U.S. Monthly Pork Exports to Mexico as of September, the total year-to-date U.S. pork exports to Mexico have increased by 8.4% compared to the same period last year.

When examining the peso currency exchange rate data from Barchart, it's noted that on July 31, 2023, the peso was recorded at 16.81 MXN/USD, a rate not seen since 2015, according to the weekly data. By the end of September, the peso began to trend slightly upward, averaging around 17.45 MXN/USD for the month. However, the rate dipped below the 18 MXN/USD mark again in late October. The most recent data, up to November 6, shows a rate of 17.59 MXN/USD.





“Urner Barry Pork Hams for Export to Mexico 23/27 have been particularly sensitive to the shifting exchange rates between the U.S. dollar and the peso.”

The strength of the peso against the dollar has continued to benefit importers, who maintain a significant advantage despite a recent rebound. Projections from the Central Bank of Mexico, usually conservative and released in the last quarter of the year, have indicated that the peso's value is 20.01% below expected levels. While the dollar's performance in the latter half of the year remains uncertain, Mexican importers, for now, are experiencing increased purchasing power due to a stronger peso.

The peso's journey through the year has been a testament to its ability to withstand the shocks of economic shifts and policy changes. The currency experienced a significant decline, dropping over 2% in a single day, following the Mexican central bank's decision to scale back certain economic measures. However, the peso's recovery was swift, showcasing its inherent strength and the quick reflexes of Mexico's financial policies.

The resilience of the peso was also evident during cultural celebrations such as the Day of the Dead, when the U.S. Federal Reserve's decision to maintain steady interest rates provided a supportive backdrop. The strong trade ties between the U.S. and Mexico, particularly in the agricultural sector, are a critical component of the peso's valuation and Mexico's economic health. The trade of bone-in hams is just one example of the many commodities that flow across the border, reflecting the deep economic interdependence of the two countries.

The peso's strong performance reflects Mexico's overall economic health, influenced by its GDP growth, worldwide inflation rates, and international trade. Its important role in sectors like agriculture, especially in trade with the U.S., shows how currency values impact global trade in the protein markets. The peso's resilience and Mexico's growing presence in world markets highlight its role as a symbol of Mexico's economic strength and a key player in global economic relationships. [UB](#)

Article contributed by **Mason Augustino** | maugustino@urnerbarry.com

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What the food industry will be watching in 2024

2023 was a pretty eventful year for the food industry, from consumers battling rising grocery prices to the USDA approving two American manufacturers to create cell-cultivated meat. While we don't know for sure what the new year will bring, industry experts have been sharing their predictions on what they think will be trending in 2024.

"Maximizing pleasure—in the forms of simple ingredients to global flavors to upscaling the everyday—and minimizing stress, whether that means slowing down, seeking convenience or value, helping to address environmental worries, or finding ways to boost health and mood, are all reflected in the emerging and continuing trends we expect to impact store shelves and restaurant menus in the coming year," said Denise Purcell, VP of Resource Development for The Specialty Food Association.

CONVENIENCE, QUALITY AND VALUE

America is back to work. Record unemployment related to the COVID-19 pandemic has simmered and the U.S. labor market has proven its resilience. Now with tighter schedules and less time for families to prepare meals, convenience will be optimal in 2024.

Remember TV dinners? Pull the tray out from in the box, poke holes in the plastic seal to ventilate, then microwave for a few minutes. Voila. Hot, "home cooked" meal. Well, they are back in style and WITH style! Golden West Food Group partnered with Walmart and several acclaimed celebrity chefs like Gordon Ramsey and Guy Fieri to help elevate your plate (while eating in your sweats). Meals are as low as \$6 and

take about six minutes to prepare, saving consumers not only money but also time.

That's not to say that eating out will be taking a back seat. The influx of people back at work is also set to turn the notch up on breakfast to-go. Technomic predicts that consumers will opt to foot a lighter bill at breakfast rather than eat out for lunch—a satisfying expenditure that doesn't feel as guilty.

While consumers stretch dollars and make more sensible decisions at lunch, Circana says the deli will see a boom as it offers healthier, higher protein items that shoppers are looking for. Lunches will be packed more often and may even include leftovers.



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A CONSTANTLY EVOLVING CENTER OF THE PLATE

Consumers today consider many more things when filling their grocery carts, like sustainability, animal welfare, and packaging. With a focus on environmental effects and individual health, The Specialty Food Association believes that 2024 will be the year cultivated meat expands as consumers will be drawn to the ethical approach to growing meat.

Plant-based meat alternatives will also gain more traction in 2024—mainly in seafood. Market trailblazers are working together to optimize taste and texture, a task proven difficult given the complexities and varieties of seafood. However, it is said that with the evolution of technology, more companies have been willing to try.

Whole Foods also states that the plant will be put back into plant-based with more protein-forward products like mushrooms, nuts, and beans in place of "complex meat alternatives."



Images provided by: By Chef Ramsay

A RETURN TO THE KITCHEN

The post-pandemic era encouraged consumers to feed the economy and to get out and return to normalcy. But 2023 saw some of that amplified buzz fizzle out as more people re-evaluated their spending habits.

The Food Industry Association predicts a lot more cooking at home will happen in 2024. Though consumers grapple with high prices, those looking for more bang for their buck can find it more feasible to prepare meals at home. The latest survey results show 52% of participants say they plan to cook more meals home and 53% say they will eat at home more. While weekly grocery bills still outpace that of 2022, they currently are still slightly lower than early 2023. [UB](#)

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Tariffs loom based on alleged dumping of Chinese pea protein into the U.S.

In July, the US International Trade Commission (ITC) and Department of Commerce (DOC) launched an investigation into alleged dumping of pea protein that could result in higher tariffs. The investigation was prompted by industry participants in the United States, who issued a formal complaint stating that imports of pea protein from China are harming the U.S. domestic industry because the imports are unfairly subsidized and sold at price levels below U.S. product.

The probe concerns importation of pea protein from China with a protein content higher than 65% on a dry weight basis. The ingredient is used in food products including plant-based meat, snack bars, cereal, baby food, and beverages.

In addition to competitive Chinese pricing putting downward pressure on the market, weak demand and surplus inventory has contributed to the decline in prices. Participants have told Mintec that buyers no longer wish to carry as much stock, which has caused a ripple effect on manufacturers that need to move product. This lack of demand could negatively impact pricing further as the new year begins.

Meantime, pea protein production capacity has been expanding throughout North America in recent years, despite soy protein continuing to be the primary ingredient option in the market. However, most sources state that production limitations could occur as North America has always had less capacity than China.

If tariffs on Chinese pea protein go into effect, China may be unable to maintain its current market position. As a result, some players state that there could be an increase in ingredient prices in the months ahead. The tariffs could also slow down supply availability in China. Sources tell Mintec that buyers will need to be prepared with North American or European suppliers as a backup, and those producers will likely raise prices.

If buyers switch suppliers, this could cause capacity limitations in North America, leading to an upswing in the market. Some players state this anti-dumping investigation could result in an overall decline of pea protein usage, with some participants pivoting to cheaper options like soy protein. Also, buyers have told Mintec that they are committing to shorter purchasing periods and will continue to do so until duties are announced and 2024 demand is sorted.

According to market players, the anti-dumping tariff must be at least 200% to balance the competition. For North America to protect its prices and market position, the duties would have to at least double China's total cost. Once the investigation is completed and a determination is made, US Customs and Border Protection will be instructed to impose import taxes on pea protein concentrate from China that is equivalent to the dumping and subsidy margins. The DOC is expected to make its preliminary decision on anti-dumping tariffs in December and a final determination in March. [UB](#)

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Factors that shaped the Mexican beef market in 2023

The Mexican beef market has exhibited a dynamic performance on various fronts throughout the year. The export and the domestic market have sustained significant activity, leading to a notable increase in prices compared to the previous year. This surge has come with some atypical trends when compared to historical data. One key factor contributing to this atypical activity in the Mexican export market is the unprecedented depreciation of the U.S. dollar against the Mexican peso. With quotes unseen since 2015, this stems from various macroeconomic factors and has significantly impacted the pricing dynamics. The depreciation of the dollar in 2023 reached up to 17% against the peso when compared to January quotes. This marks the lowest record for the last seven years, taking stakeholders off guard, who had initially anticipated an exchange rate increase of approximately 2% to 4%. This is what the Mexican central bank forecasted at the very beginning of the year.

This unforeseen shift prompted Mexican sellers to reconsider their strategies, favoring the Mexican domestic market over Mexican exports. The domestic market, in turn, experienced stronger offers, pushed by the limited product availability for certain beef products, particularly end cuts. These cuts displayed firmer quotations and a greater presence domestically compared to abroad. Sellers experienced higher returns selling domestically rather than exporting. This was a consequence of the fact that the increase in prices within the export market did not align

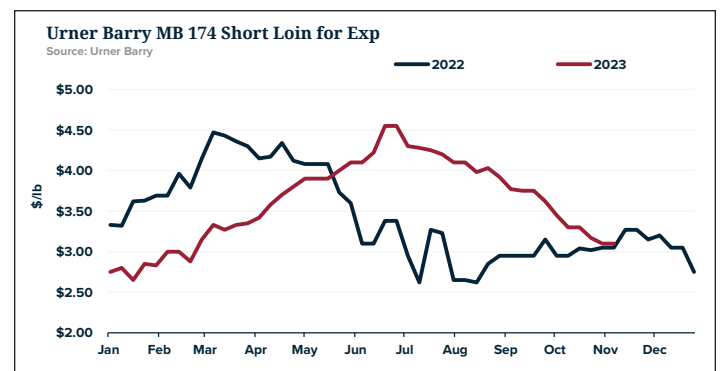
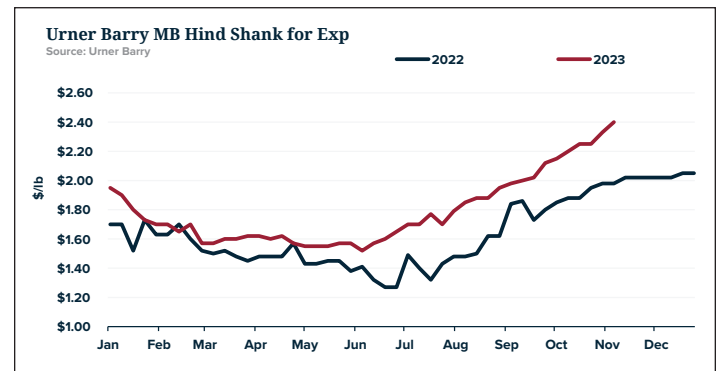
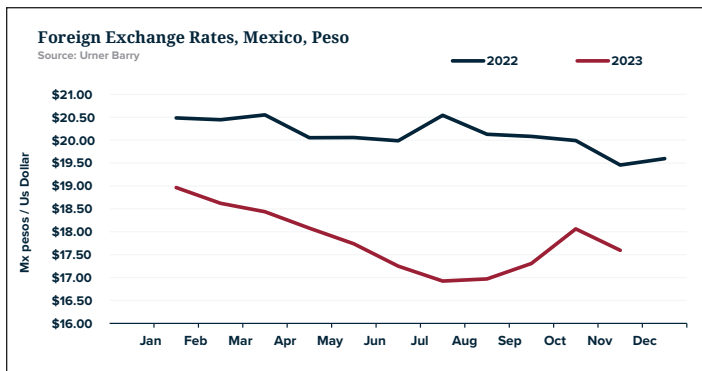
proportionately with the appreciation of the exchange rate. This consistently showed prices above the previous year, challenging typical seasonal patterns.

The high demand in the domestic market resulted in a significant portion of the available beef supply being committed to in advance. Buyers have been quick to secure inventories to accomplish their business needs. This situation led to a shortage of available material in the spot market throughout the year.

However, not all items maintained this stability. For instance, filets exhibited significant price fluctuations throughout the year. The short loin also experienced pockets of volatility, while prices typically trended in a seasonal pattern, periods of brisk buying brought prices nearly 50% higher than year ago levels.

In summary, 2023 saw a notably stronger performance in the Mexican domestic market compared to preceding years, exerting a significant impact on the export market prices. The interaction between economic variables, the introduction of new participants like Brazilian meat, and evolving market dynamics set a challenging environment where adaptability, timing, and strategic decision-making has proved to be crucial. [UB](#)

Article contributed by **Jaime Almeida**
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“The high demand in the domestic market resulted in a significant portion of the available beef supply being committed to in advance.”

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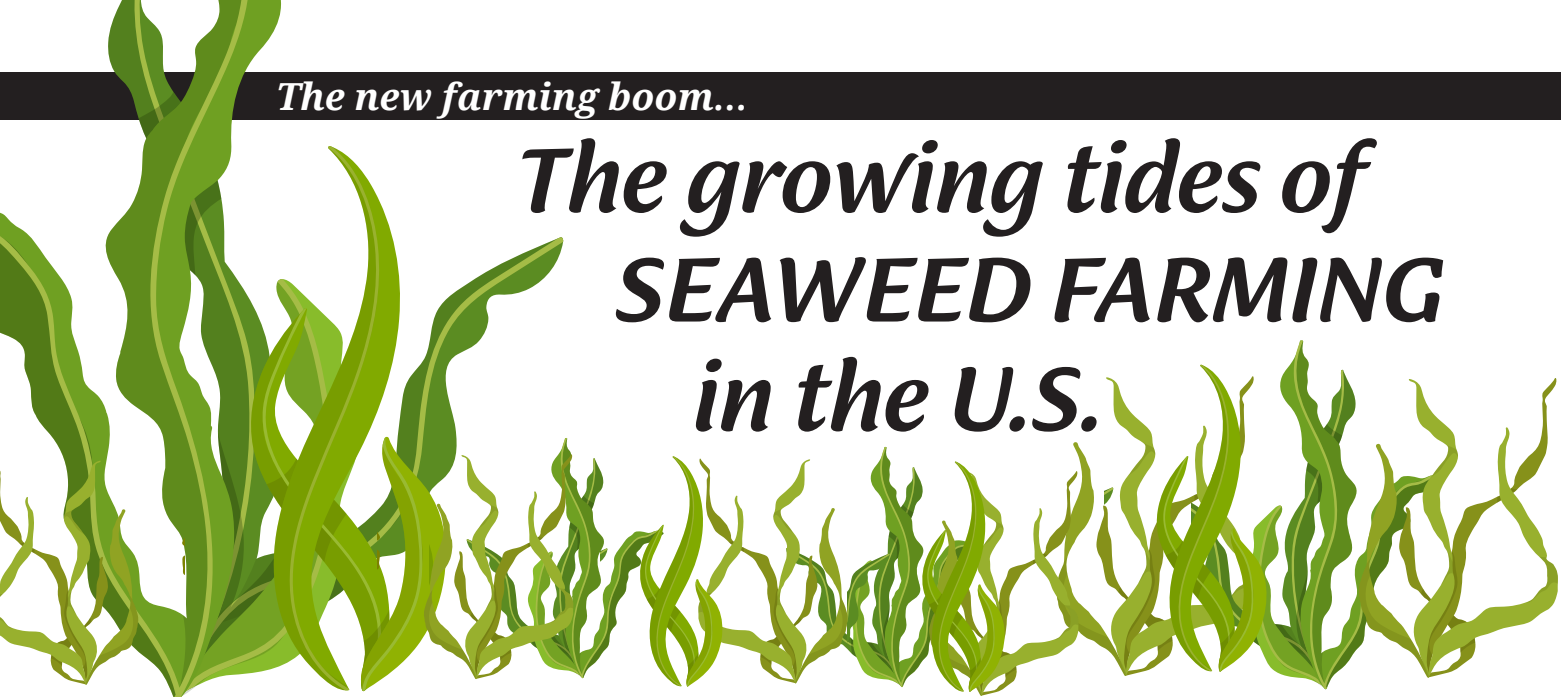
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The growing tides of SEAWEED FARMING in the U.S.



Seaweed cultivation, a practice deeply rooted in the traditions of Japan, China, and Korea, has recently sparked significant interest in the U.S. This renewed attention is spurred by its recognized role as a sustainable solution to pressing global issues like climate change, food security, and the preservation of ocean ecosystems. Investors, environmental advocates, and food enthusiasts are all drawn to this growing trend, leading to the establishment of numerous aquatic farms in locations such as Maine, Alaska, and along the Pacific Northwest. The momentum behind seaweed farming is fueled by its promising environmental advantages and substantial economic prospects. According to a recent report from the World Bank, the emerging global seaweed markets are poised to potentially reach a value of up to \$11.8 billion by 2030, exhibiting a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of around 2.5% between 2023 and 2030.

Seaweed farming, also known as mariculture, involves cultivating various marine algae species in underwater environments. Using methods like vertical or 3D farming, seaweed farmers can achieve substantial yields from relatively small areas. Most seaweed is grown on longlines, suspended four to eight feet below the water's surface during the winter season. This farming approach encompasses diverse seaweed types, including dulse, bull kelp, ribbon kelp, and sugar kelp, which are used in various culinary delights like sushi, salsas, sauces, salads, seasonings, and other food products. Furthermore, farmed seaweed finds applications in cosmetics, animal feed, and fertilizers.

ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS

One of the primary driving forces behind the rise of seaweed farming is its environmental benefits. Seaweeds act as natural carbon sinks, absorbing significant amounts of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, mitigating climate change, and combating ocean acidification. Seaweed grows rapidly and does not require arable land or freshwater, making it a sustainable resource for food, biofuels, and various industrial applications. These farms also serve as nurseries for marine life, enhancing biodiversity and supporting fish populations. They purify seawater, improve overall water quality, reduce greenhouse gas levels, and combat ocean acidification, which threatens marine ecosystems. Seaweed farming also plays a crucial role in enhancing water quality by absorbing excess nutrients, reducing the likelihood of harmful algal blooms, and promoting overall ecosystem health. Furthermore, seaweed provides shelter and sustenance to various marine species, easing pressure on natural seaweed populations and creating healthier underwater habitats.

ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

Seaweed farming offers significant economic benefits to coastal communities, providing a sustainable source of income and diversifying economic activities in these regions. It creates job opportunities in cultivation, harvesting, processing, marketing, and distribution. As the industry expands, more employment opportunities emerge, reducing unemployment rates and

improving coastal residents' livelihoods. The global seaweed market's growth presents coastal communities with the opportunity to tap into new markets, generate revenue, and potentially increase their exports. Furthermore, seaweed farming can help buffer these communities against the unpredictable nature of traditional fisheries, which are vulnerable to overfishing and environmental changes. With its low environmental impact and sustainable practices, seaweed farming not only offers economic security but also contributes to the long-term resilience of these communities.

CULINARY AND NUTRITIONAL APPEAL

Seaweed has transitioned from a niche ingredient to a culinary staple, reflecting evolving consumer preferences. It is nutrient-rich, packed with vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants, while also being low in calories and fat, making it a healthy choice for those seeking a balanced diet. The unique mix of nutrients in seaweed supports immune function, bone health, and overall vitality, making it a valuable addition to a diverse and health-conscious diet. As consumers look for alternative and nutritious food sources, seaweed products have gained popularity in various cuisines.

EXPORT POTENTIAL

With the rise in global demand for seaweed-based products, the U.S. has the potential to tap into international markets. Seaweed is a key ingredient in Asian cuisines and is gaining traction in Western countries. The export of domestically

cultivated seaweed could significantly benefit the U.S. economy.

CHALLENGES AND CONSIDERATIONS

While the advantages of seaweed farming are considerable, it comes with its share of challenges and considerations. Large-scale seaweed farming poses ecological risks, including concerns about over farming, the introduction of non-native species, and the potential spread of diseases, all of which require careful management. The regulatory landscape for seaweed farming is still evolving in many regions, demanding a delicate balance between economic development and environmental sustainability with resource management. Harvesting seaweed is a labor-intensive process with potential environmental impacts, making it crucial to choose appropriate methods and locations to minimize harm to the ecosystem.

To ensure that seaweed farming lives up to its potential, collaboration among

stakeholders at all levels—farmers, researchers, governments, and consumers—is essential. This collaboration should focus on developing sustainable practices, establishing robust regulatory frameworks, and supporting market growth. Additionally, continuous research is necessary to gain a better understanding of the long-term ecological and environmental effects of seaweed farming.

While seaweed farming holds promise as an industry contributing to a more sustainable and healthier future, it is not a cure-all solution. When used responsibly, it can be a valuable tool in the broader effort to address global challenges. Despite the challenges it may face, seaweed farming remains a crucial piece of the puzzle in the pursuit of a more sustainable and environmentally friendly world. [UB](#)

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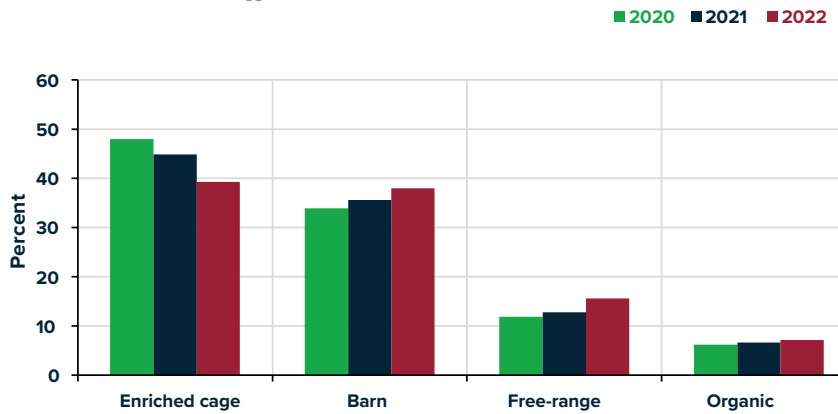
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The difficult road to cage-free eggs in the EU

With nearly 390 million laying hens in 2022, the European Union is one of the top regions of the world to produce table eggs and egg products. It is also among the first to engage with cage-free regulations, with a deadline of January 2027 for the total disappearance of cages in egg farms. However, since the law was adopted in 2021, we have seen the emergence of global high inflation, a consequence of the post-pandemic economic situation, and the energy crisis following the Russian invasion of Ukraine. For consumers—as the cost of their grocery baskets kept soaring—they were prompted to choose egg categories more aligned to their newly found buying power. And this is not always compatible with cage-free options like free-range or organic.

Laying Hens per Housing Type in the EU

Source: Eurostat and National Egg Associations



The 2023 numbers provided by the European Commission, combined with some recent national updates (namely for Italy), show that in the EU, 60.7% of laying hens are brought up in cage-free environments, such as barns or free-range farms. Overall, the cage-free category is progressing year-on-year, but at a slow pace. In 2020, 48% of EU hens were kept in enriched cages. This decreased to 44.9% one year later, and 39.3% in 2022. The cage-free indicator moved by less than 5.0 percentage points per year. At this rate, it is unclear if the 2027 deadline will be reached for all EU members.

This shift in production type was initiated by consumers demanding improved animal welfare in industrial farms; 1.4 million signatures were collected from EU citizens in the “End the Cage Age” initiative. Subsequently, many food manufacturers and supermarkets embraced this trend by highlighting “cage-free egg” in their lists of ingredients included. Since then, operational changes started in EU farms, but the situations are extremely varied. In Germany, Austria, Sweden and Luxembourg, the proportion of hens in caged housing counts now for less than 5% of the total flock (in fact nil for Austria and Sweden). Slovenia, Denmark, and the Netherlands are also on the low side,

with between 10 and 20% (10.1% for the Netherlands). Further down come France, Italy and Finland, with between 28% and 33% of caged laying hens. This group of 10 countries—who have under a third of their flock in cages—own in total around 56% of all the laying hens in the EU. At the other end of the scale, another group of EU members, including large producers like Poland, Spain, Portugal, and the Baltic countries, started the transition to cage-free premises later. For them, caged hens still represent between 69% and 100% (for Malta) of the national hen flocks.

One of the major factors delaying the transition to cage-free is the cost of living, specifically the costs incurred in grocery shopping. The price rises observed since last year on food products in the EU reached double-digit figures last winter. Since this summer, inflation is stabilizing but remains at elevated levels compared with 2021. According to Eurostat, the yearly inflation rate on non-processed food stood at 6.6% in September 2023, against 12.7% in September 2022. The consumer wallet has also been shrinking since 2021. So now, the difference in pricing between a box of six barn eggs at 1.15€, and a box of six free-range eggs at 1.99€ (both Carrefour), is having an impact in purchasing decisions.

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Also, on the supply side, farmers in 2022 had to deal with the “perfect storm,” which combined to impact production costs and volumes. These included severe avian influenza outbreaks and soaring energy and feed costs. This critical sequence of events drove many EU egg producers to delay the required building works and equipment transformations to necessitate the shift from cage to cage-free operations, as they were running out of funds.

Finally, it is worth noting that the EU code that reveals the housing type on eggs (3 for cage, 2 for barn, 1 for free-range and 0 for organic) is only applied on table eggs but not on processed egg products. Consumers cannot identify the type of egg used in liquid and dried eggs unless the producer adds it voluntarily on the packaging. The list of ingredients included in products prepared by food manufacturers, bakeries, and foodservice

“One of the major factors delaying the transition to cage-free is the cost of living, specifically the costs incurred in grocery shopping.”

usually does not show this information. As cage remains the most profitable production type—with cheaper prices for end users—this leaves space for a cage egg market dedicated to eggs for breaking.

In general, the cage-free trend is slowly spreading around the world, from Paris and New York to Hong Kong or Wellington. However, there are a myriad of elements that comprise people’s purchasing

decisions. These include price, size, origin and housing type. Across the Atlantic in the U.S., as part of the Proposition 12 initiatives, around half of the states are prioritizing the same cage-free objective. In October 2023, 126 million hens out of a total 322 million in the whole of the U.S. are housed cage-free, which is 39.2% of the U.S. flock. So, while there is clear evidence to support the shift to cage-free, it appears the road may be long and difficult until such eggs are completely banned from our plates. [UB](#)

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PFAS: What are they and why are they important?

PFAS is a growing acronym that is becoming more well known around the media and within the industry. It stands for Per-and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances; a group of manufactured chemicals that have been used in industry products for quite some time. There are thousands of these chemicals and substances and some of them are more used than others, and have more information and research than others.

The major issue with these chemicals is the amount of time they take to breakdown. PFAS have the potential to build up in people and the environment over time, which is an area which could be of concern.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has taken a closer look at these chemicals and the food industry is an area of focus, along with food packaging. The question becomes what levels are safe and how the PFAS chemicals get into our food. The FDA currently states that an example where PFAS can be found in food is if a fish is caught from water contaminated by PFAS and “dairy products from livestock exposed to PFAS.” In addressing food packaging, the FDA writes as an example that PFAS can be found in “grease-resistant paper, fast food containers/wrappers, microwave popcorn bags, pizza boxes, and candy wrappers.”

The FDA reports that there could be adverse health outcomes if exposed to these chemicals, but more research is needed and ongoing. The FDA is also researching the effects of long-term exposure of these chemicals on human health, specifically in children.

The National Fisheries Institute (NFI), during their September Leadership Forum in Washington D.C., addressed the seafood industry on the topic and also invited the FDA to educate members. NFI is also planning a forum to further notify and educate the seafood industry on PFAS.

“The FDA is still studying whether food provides a significant exposure to PFAS. This is the purpose of the testing that the agency is doing,” said a NFI spokesperson. “With the exception of one product, the levels of PFAS found in seafood products tested were very, very low—in parts per trillion—with exposures not likely to be a health concern. Until more is learned about exposure to PFAS through foods, routine testing of products is not warranted.”

The forum mentioned above will take place during the Global Seafood Marketing Conference in Orlando, Florida, in January 2024. NFI will be hosting a Science and Regulatory Forum on Sunday, January 21.

Please join NFI at the JW Marriott Grande Lakes, Orlando, Florida, on Sunday, January 21 and Monday, January 22, 2024. To register, please visit [aboutseafood.com](https://www.aboutseafood.com) or scan the code below. [UB](#)

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2024 NFI SEAFOOD SCIENCE & REGULATORY FORUM

Registration for NFI's 2024 Seafood Science & Regulatory Forum, now includes NFI's Committee meetings (Technical, Government, and Importers) on Monday, January 22, 2024. The Forum planning committee has put together a fantastic agenda and will be delving deep into several hot issues impacting the seafood industry, as well as the FDA FSMA Traceability Rule to help companies implement within your supply chains.

The Seafood Science and Regulatory Forum includes:

- **Current Regulatory Challenges**
FDA's FSMA 204 Traceability Rule Implementation
- **In the News**
*PFAS—
What They Are and the Regulatory Landscape*
- **Hot Topics**
Impact of Climate Change on Seafood Safety with guest speaker Dr. Stacy Wiggins, FDA
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Legal Risks of Label Claims
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Animal nutrition industry executives discuss factors impacting animal protein consumption

Feedinfo sat down with senior executives in the animal nutrition space to get their outlook on the economy in 2024. One of the key market dynamics that came up was the evolution of animal protein consumption on a global scale. Specifically, the long-term trends and fundamentals, the regional differences at play, as well as the other non-economic drivers.

Right off the bat they observed that overall global animal protein consumption is growing, albeit at a slower pace.

“Higher prices are likely to negatively impact beef and pork, while poultry is expected to benefit, increasing around 1%. Animal protein consumption will likely continue to increase but at a slower pace,” said Ivo Lansbergen, President Animal Nutrition & Health, DSM-Firmenich, commenting on meat consumption.

“The pandemic dealt a blow to consumer spending, which inflation has not helped. These factors have certainly had an impact on meat consumption patterns. Reports tell us that consumer patterns in high-income countries have begun to stagnate, particularly based on the type and quality of meat consumed (poultry instead of beef or pork, for instance). So, there are concerns that higher-income consumers will continue to shift their behaviours,” added Dan Meagher, President & CEO, Novus.

“While we are seeing modest growth across the global animal protein sector, we are still facing high costs across the food supply chain, swings in consumption and other areas of uncertainty for producers. A question remains on whether reduced discretionary income due to inflation will impact consumer demand for animal protein, as well as what future demand from China will hold, where we are seeing overall weak meat consumption. As a result, margins are squeezed, and opportunities are more restricted,” added Ruth Kimmelshue, Head of Cargill Animal Nutrition & Health.

The companies also observe different dynamics between protein types and regions.

“From a regional perspective, growth will be mainly driven by consumers in low- and middle-income countries, predominantly in Asia Pacific and partially Northern Africa. The strongest protein production growth will be seen in Asia Pacific and South America. In regions like the European Union, the sensitivity towards animal welfare, environmental and health concerns is growing. In addition, policies like the Green Deal in Europe will most likely dampen growth,” explained Julia Raquet, Senior Vice President, BASF Nutrition Ingredients.

“Poultry is benefitting from the global shift towards more sustainable production, as its environmental impact is still lighter than other species. This is driving a growth in consumption globally and in all geographies. Dairy is also growing overall, despite concerns regarding environmental impact in western countries,



“The pandemic dealt a blow to consumer spending, which inflation has not helped. These factors have certainly had an impact on meat consumption patterns...”

and is expected to develop further in some key geographies (APAC, China, Indian subcontinent). The swine industry has suffered from the low economic rebound in China, as it represents more and more of the global demand, today the overall outlook is not very positive as demand in several key markets is limited (Europe),” added Frédéric Jacquin, Chief Operating Officer & Deputy President, and Dr. Zhigang Hao, Chairman & CEO, Adisseo.

Looking more specifically at Europe, Pieter Wolleswinkel, CEO, ForFarmers, total consumption for meat is slightly decreasing, especially in northwest Europe and shifting from pork to poultry. For dairy, however, consumption within Europe is stable, although the consumption of fresh dairy products is going down a little. This is more than compensated by higher consumption of cheese. “Here, the northwestern European dairy industry is very well positioned,” he commented.

For other parts of the world, the scenario is different. Novus’ Meagher commented: “Where there is hope is where meat consumption is growing – in growing economies like India, the Philippines, and Vietnam. We also know Latin America, Brazil in particular, is poised to grow thanks to its export business.”

In Europe, societal pressures influencing demand surrounding meat consumption are rapidly intensifying compared to the rest of the world.

Jolanda van Haarlem, Group Director Specialties and Global Strategy Director, Royal Agrifirm, said: “The societal pressure around meat eating in Europe is really growing fast. People tend to say, ‘I’m not eating meat’ or ‘I’m eating less meat,’ but if you look at the statistics, it’s not declining that fast. I think the big difference that you see is that societal pressure in Europe is biggest and we as a company need to deal with that. We need to make sure that we listen to our customers [in Europe] and come up with the innovations that fit the desire for plant-based proteins. On the other hand, in China or in Brazil, we see

an increase in traditional protein demand. We’re not hearing the ‘lowering our meat eating’ discussions as much in those areas.”

Regional animal protein sector dynamics are also not immune to animal disease outbreaks, which continue to be a large concern affecting the industry in several key markets. Avian influenza is a global issue and although less extreme than before, African Swine Fever is still a concern in many markets.

“Livestock and poultry disease continues to be a major concern in terms of animal welfare, loss reduction and sustainability, and the overall viability and profitability of protein producers. A major disease outbreak could influence both the availability and consumption of protein globally,” explained Dr. Chris Nelson, President & CEO, Kemin.

“In the US, foreign animal diseases such as African Swine Fever virus and Foot and Mouth Disease remain top of mind, along with endemic diseases such as Porcine Reproductive and Respiratory Syndrome virus and Avian Influenza— which represent significant liveability and economic challenges,” he added.

However, beyond 2024, the prospects for animal protein consumption are promising.

“Globally, the growth trend will continue even if we have faced a slowdown in recent years,” said Rémi Cristoforetti, CEO, Le Gouessant.

BASF Nutrition Ingredients’ Raquet added: “We see healthy growth in animal protein consumption in the long term. When looking more granularly into this growth we see worldwide a shift towards poultry meat and aquaculture. On the other side we see that animal protein will continue to clearly dominate the markets for the coming decades as the trend towards alternative proteins has slowed down tremendously.”

David Blakemore, CEO, Trouw Nutrition, also said: “We expect to see growth in global animal protein consumption driven

by population and income development, with developing economies closing the gap in per capita consumption of animal protein. In several developed economies, we do see shifts in consumer preferences driven by an increased focus on health and sustainability.”

dsm-firmenich’s Lansbergen went on to say: “Overall, I do not have any particular concern from a demand perspective, but rather more concerns on the supply side. There are animal disease outbreaks such as African swine fever and avian influenza, for example. And there’s a greater question looming related to the supply of animal proteins: how will we provide nutritious food, including animal proteins, within planetary boundaries that is also affordable? That is the issue we need to tackle collectively.” [UB](#)

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UK beef imports and exports down on weak demand

IMPORTS

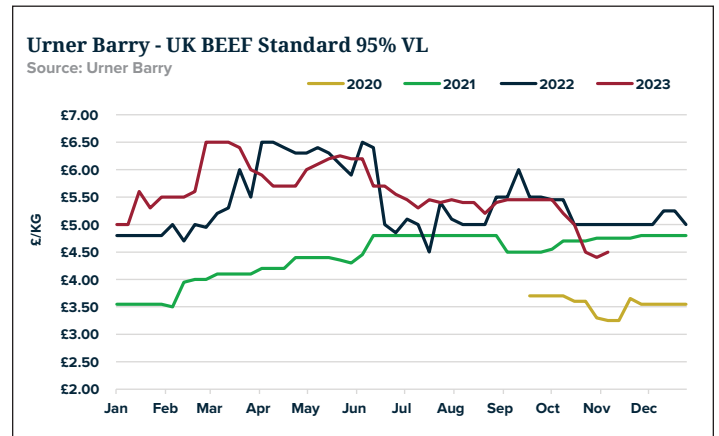
According to data from Global Trade Tracker, fresh and frozen beef imports totaled 164,671 MT in the nine months ending in September; 4.1% down from 2022. Some market participants have linked this to a drop in domestic beef demand, which could be caused by food price inflation and cost-of-living increases. UK beef imports primarily come from the European Union. Despite a 0.4% decrease, Irish beef continues to dominate UK beef imports. Irish imports totaled 119,850 MT and made up 72% of total UK beef imports.

Another significant player in the UK beef import market is Poland, the sixth largest producer of beef in the EU, after France, Germany, Italy, Spain, and Ireland. In recent years, 84-94% of Polish beef production has been exported. Beef shipments from Poland into the UK grew by 9.6% from last year, accounting for 7.3% of total UK beef imports.

Imports from the Netherlands and Germany fell by 18.4% and 50.5% respectively compared to the equivalent period in 2022, while shipments from France grew by 53.7% during the same period. The three EU countries combined accounted for 11.9% of UK beef imports.

Outside the EU, Brazilian shipments into the UK increased by 6.9% from 2022. The UK has lifted reinforced inspections on meat products from Brazil after examining the country's control system in October 2022. The decision covers consignments of beef, poultry, and meat products from Brazil to England, Scotland, and Wales.

In May 2023 the UK-Australia and the UK-New Zealand free trade agreements came into effect, improving market access for New Zealand and Australian beef producers and exporters into the UK. Shipments from New Zealand and Australia were significantly up by 72.3% and 45.6% respectively, however these increases were from lower bases. The two countries together contributed 1.3% of total imports.



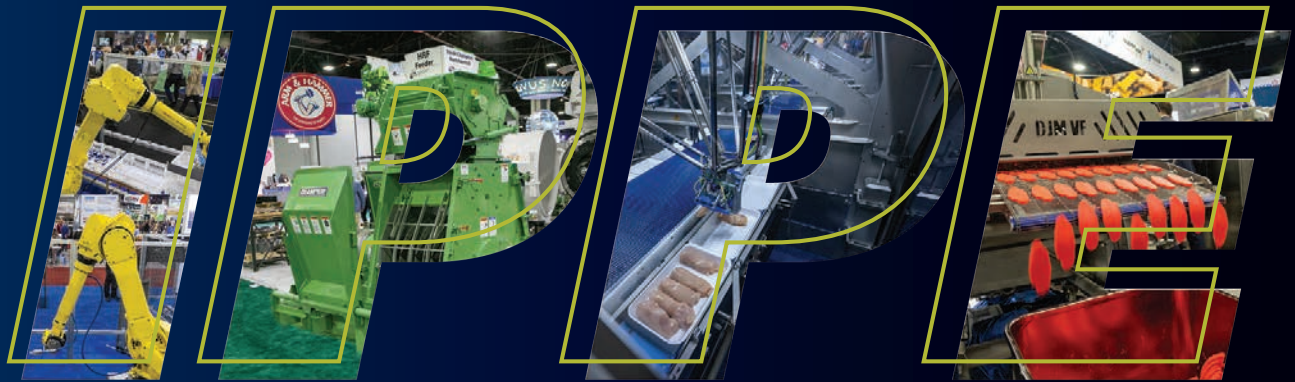
EXPORTS

For the period January 2023 to September 2023, the UK was a net importer of beef. Total fresh and frozen beef exports were 74,662 MT, a 19.9% decrease from the previous year. Ireland remains the leading destination for UK beef with shipments of 25,534 MT, down 8.6% from last year, followed by France and the Netherlands, which were also down 25.27% and 22.28%, respectively. Exports to Hong Kong increased by 21.1%.

Meanwhile in the domestic markets, higher interest rates and inflationary pressure remain common topics that participants indicated are hindering beef demand. While demand for VLs normally tends to be more even throughout the year compared to other cuts, in recent weeks, market participants are seeing some unusual declines in orders from foodservice, manufacturing as well as exports to Europe. Prices for standard VLs have plunged below the 52-week low price points, with 95% standard VL's trading at £3.00-£4.50/KG. [UB](#)

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An educational and networking marathon...

Urner Barry's Global Protein Summit returns to Chicago

Buyers and sellers from across the supply chain gathered for a marathon weekend in Chicago for the annual Urner Barry Global Protein Summit, held at the Intercontinental Magnificent Mile Hotel. The conference caters its content to those in the beef, pork, poultry and seafood markets, analyzing the biggest events impacting pricing, and the major pain points in the sectors.

The fourth iteration of the Global Protein Summit came with new faces and innovative market discussions to cover the gamut of center of the plate protein topics. For one, this year's Global Protein Summit was the first to be held by Urner Barry in collaboration with Mintec, following the merger of the two companies in early 2023. Mintec provides market intelligence on commodities foreign to Urner Barry subscribers, such as grains, weather, dairy, cocoa and more. Some of the Mintec analysts on hand were able to present on topics such as grain prices, forecasting into the protein sector, and cost modeling for the food sector.

Another new edition to the Global Protein Summit was the inclusion of the Women in Food and Agriculture Roadshow. This tour of educational sessions began at the FeedInfo Summit in Vienna and then concluded at our event in Chicago. The Women in Food and Agriculture initiative is a mentorship program for women in the sector who are looking to grow professionally through understanding the pathways of other women in the industry, while having a mentor who can help them on their journey. The sessions at the Global Protein Summit highlighted female leadership, encouraging diverse workplaces, hiring practices and navigating minority solutions. While primarily attended by females, some of the men in the audience learned a lot from the educational speakers. Allan Bean, COO of TradeCafe, one of the sponsors of the event, took some key lessons back with him to his leadership role.

"We are in an industry with historically high turnover rates, human capital challenges, and tend to be laggards in software adoption. To combat all of these, it's important that we attract a diverse group of candidates that provide balanced views and varying approaches to the challenges we face," said Bean. "Individuals



tend to choose their role models from those most like them—if we don't actively prove those role models exist in our industry, we are at a disadvantage in attracting the best and brightest from the new generations in the workforce.”

Some of the other highlights from the conference included expert market analysis from Urner Barry market reporters, panels on consumer demand, risk management and sustainability, and breakout sessions including the state of Prop 12 and export and import analysis for the seafood sector. But it wasn't all education in Chicago. Those who attended were able to enjoy a night of bowling, drinks and other games at the networking session at Pinstripes Chicago.

Next on the radar for Urner Barry Events is the historic Executive Conference in Las Vegas, Nevada, from April 14-16. The leaders of the egg, poultry and red meat industry have for years attended this meeting as a place for high quality networking, inspiring keynotes and hands on market intel from Urner Barry reporters. For more information on the Executive Conference visit urnerbarry.com/executive. For sponsorship opportunities please reach out to blynskey@urnerbarry.com. [UB](http://ub.com)

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INDUSTRY TRIUMPHS!!

Article contributed by
The National Turkey Federation



BRINGING TURKEY TO NEW MARKETS

Amidst an everchanging protein marketplace, the turkey industry has prioritized investing in the future of the industry and identifying new markets for turkey products. The U.S. turkey industry celebrated a major win in September when India announced it was eliminating the retaliatory tariff on U.S. frozen whole turkeys and frozen turkey parts and reducing the basic tariff on those products from 30% to 5%.

The National Turkey Federation (NTF) praised the decision as it has created an important new market for U.S. turkey producers while providing Indians more affordable access to a nutritious, delicious protein. The USA Poultry & Egg Export Council (USAPEEC), the Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR) and the leadership of U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) were instrumental in achieving this accomplishment in addition to Senators Mark Warner, Thom Tillis, Amy Klobuchar, Mike Braun, Tina Smith, John Thune, and Tim Kaine spearheading congressional efforts to ensure U.S. turkey growers can effectively compete in this fast-growing marketplace.



NTF continues to focus on other markets as well, including Caribbean countries and Latin America. Challenges remain in all these markets, but NTF looks forward to further expanding its efforts to provide a healthy, lean protein option to consumers abroad by cultivating valuable key trade relationships, updating existing trade agreements and navigating existing sanctions.

CHAMPIONING FOOD SAFETY

NTF members take great pride in providing safe, nutritious products to consumers and proactively working to further advance public health. On the food safety front, NTF remains committed to working with members and food safety partners to address Salmonella in poultry products and identify scientific and technological innovations that will help us reduce naturally occurring pathogens in turkey products.

NTF has provided feedback on proposed changes in the way industry and government addresses Salmonella, including FSIS' Proposed Regulatory Framework to Reduce Salmonella Illnesses Attributable to Poultry and the FSIS proposal to declare not-ready-to-eat (NRTE) breaded stuffed chicken products that contain Salmonella at levels of 1 colony forming unit (CFU) per gram as adulterated. Our goal is to ensure policy is based on science-driven principles.

Furthermore, NTF is focused on harnessing the power of social media to help consumers become more familiar with the importance of practicing the four core practices of food safety in the kitchen: clean, separate, cook and chill. By incorporating food safety tips in NTF's turkey recipes, social media posts and blogs, social media users are regularly reminded of how best to prevent foodborne illnesses.

TAILGATING WITH TURKEY

As part of its effort to educate consumers on the versatility and benefits turkey has to offer year-round, NTF launched Tailgate with Turkey to help football fans take their tailgates and game day experiences to the next level. Through a series of online promotions and a great partnership with the Kansas City Chiefs Radio Network and United Soybean Board, Tailgate with Turkey has been featured on a national stage. This program has further built on the successful integration of Turkey Smoke, NTF's barbecue competition series in partnership with the Kansas City Barbeque Society (KCBS), into the competitive barbecue space. As a result, Tailgate with Turkey has further enhanced the consumer-facing platform to showcase turkey's place on the grill and smoker from the backyard to the stadium.



Photos provided by NTF



RECOGNIZING NTF PRESIDENT JOEL BRANDENBERGER

NTF President Joel Brandenberger (pictured left) in October announced his plan to retire June 30, 2024, after 33 years with the National Turkey Federation, 17 of which he served as President. The NTF team and membership are deeply appreciative of Joel's contributions over the years. It is an honor to recognize his valuable years of service and wish him the best in this next chapter of life.

Brandenberger joined NTF in May 1991 as Director of Public Affairs. He was promoted to Vice President of Legislative Affairs in 1995 and Senior Vice President for Legislative Affairs in 2001 before becoming NTF's fifth CEO in December 2006. A native of Houston, Brandenberger is a distinguished alumnus of Texas Tech University, where he graduated in 1982 with a journalism degree. Prior to joining NTF, he was a newspaper reporter and editor before working for legislative offices in the Texas Senate and U.S. House of Representatives. Joel and his wife, Susan, plan to spend retirement at their homes in Florida and Utah. [UB](#)



"...Tailgate with Turkey has further enhanced the consumer-facing platform to showcase turkey's place on the grill and smoker from the backyard to the stadium."



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FLOTUS egg farm visit a BREAKTHROUGH FOR EGGS



Article contributed by Emily Metz,
President & CEO, American Egg Board

World Egg Day this year marked an historic moment for America's egg farmers and an important milestone in AEB's relationship with the White House. On October 13, First Lady of the United States Jill Biden celebrated U.S. egg producers by visiting and touring the facilities at Outward Farms, a family-owned egg farm in Raymond, Ohio, where she learned firsthand from founder, CEO and third-generation egg farmer Sandra Lausecker about the hard work, expertise and dedication required to produce the tens of billions of high-quality, nutritious eggs that Americans love and count on each year.

The significance of this visit cannot be understated for our egg industry and for agriculture. The White House told us that with the exception of one campaign stop many years ago, Dr. Biden had never had the opportunity to visit a farm—any farm—and that they viewed this visit to an egg farm as an introduction and a beginning to much needed further conversations about egg farming and American agriculture.

The visit also marked an achievement in our journey at AEB to educate the nation about the importance of eggs and the farmers who produce them, generating tremendous positive coverage for egg farming. In an extended coverage cycle that started days before the actual visit, more than 84 segments aired across major broadcast outlets including NBC, ABC, CBS, and Fox, generating an estimated 85 million views in markets across the country.

The tour offered the First Lady and guests an in-depth look at Outward Farms' operations—from spending time with the hens and understanding what goes into keeping them strong and healthy, to learning about the stringent on-farm measures taken to ensure food safety, to seeing how eggs are washed and inspected before being delivered fresh to stores. Importantly, the tour also acquainted Dr. Biden and guests with the rigorous and comprehensive biosecurity protocols egg



Top: Sandra Lausecker, along with Emily Metz, greets First Lady Jill Biden. Bottom: Daniel Lausecker shows the First Lady plant operations. Photos provided by AEB.



farms across the country have implemented to protect their flocks from avian diseases like highly pathogenic avian influenza.

The First Lady and her team were engaged, asked loads of questions and were truly illuminated and inspired by all that goes into an egg's journey. The Lauseckers were phenomenal hosts and effectively put their lives on hold for weeks to work with the White House advance team to coordinate countless logistics, movements and details to prepare for such an important guest. They represented us well and did a great service to all egg farmers across the country.

AEB was immensely proud to arrange and cohost this visit, which reflected another breakthrough in our ongoing relationship and

“...they viewed this visit to an egg farm as an introduction and a beginning to much needed further conversations about egg farming and American agriculture.”



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strong partnership with the White House. Discussions about this visit began in early spring, when the White House asked what they could do to help egg farmers tell the story of how an egg gets to consumers, and of course, to the South Lawn at the White House Easter Egg Roll. And I can promise you that this event carries great significance as we commence planning in earnest with the White House for the 2024 White House Easter Egg Roll.

We continue to explore with the White House how eggs can play an even bigger *roll* on the South Lawn for Easter 2024. The opportunity has

never been greater to celebrate America's egg farmers and their perfect protein on the national stage at a time of year that truly is the Super Bowl for eggs. [UB](#)



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BEEF BASH '23:

A recap and insider look at one of the beef industry's premier events



Over 700 attendees from more than 15 countries converged in Las Vegas, Nevada, at the Red Rocks Hotel and Casino on September 20 to celebrate the Certified Angus Beef's® (CAB) Annual Conference, marking the 45th anniversary of the brand. This conference recognizes and celebrates all the partnerships and achievements that make the CAB brand a success. Featuring ranchers to restaurants and everyone in between, this is an event and celebration like no other.

Certified Angus Beef's® jam-packed conference kicked off Wednesday morning with the annual Mick Colvin Scholarship Classic Golf Outing at the iconic TPC Las Vegas. In 2023, the brand awarded 23 scholarships for aspiring future leaders in the agriculture space. If golf wasn't your thing, a tour of the iconic Hoover Dam was offered.

Later that evening, participants convened at the outdoor pool for the #BeefBash23 welcome party—a one of a kind networking event that showcased unforgettable Certified Angus Beef® bites prepared by the brand's premier chefs. This was a phenomenal opportunity to try different cuts and connect with colleagues from around the globe.

Each morning of the conference was filled with breakfast offerings from various sponsors of the event, each embodying the CAB's motto: If it's not CERTIFIED, it's not the best™. On Thursday, participants met in the Red Rock Ballroom for the first general session of the conference. The brand's President Dr. John Stika welcomed all and gave his "state of the brand" presentation with an added Vegas-style flair, which the crowd thoroughly enjoyed at eight o'clock in the morning.





Although the beef industry has had a rocky run in the last year, Dr. Stika shared positive news with the brand's partners, including the fact that the CAB brand had once again sold over one billion pounds. Additionally, the brand continued to see strong export demand during a challenging period, selling 188 million pounds internationally. Moreover, foodservice and value-added product sales were up 2.4% and 9.8%, respectively, from last year. Certified Angus Beef® Prime sales touched a new milestone, selling 41 million pounds. The team reinforced that it was a positive year and encouraged partners to join the brand by being "all in" on quality in 2024.

Following Dr. Stika was Jon Gordon, who shared his knowledge of positive culture and how to bring out the best in yourself and your team. Gordon reenergized the crowd to close out the year on a strong and positive note.

The event then broke out into various seminars for each facet of the business, ranging from in-store marketing to beef fabrication

"This conference recognizes and celebrates all the partnerships and achievements that make the CAB brand a success."

lessons. Lunchtime was once again an opportunity for various partners to showcase and promote new delicious Certified Angus Beef® products while networking. The Certified Angus Beef® Annual Conference is teeming with information, but it also offers ample time to relax and reconnect with colleagues or even find opportunities for new business.

Closing out this year's conference was the Certified Angus Beef® Meat Ball, a black-tie event with auctions for the Mick Colvin Scholarship Fund, as well as a three-course celebratory dinner. There are over 200 awards given out to partners during the

event and the final winners across each category are revealed at the dinner. From students to foodservice participants, there is no one who goes unrecognized for their hard work and dedication in making the Certified Angus Beef® brand what it is. [UB](#)

Article contributed by **Todd Unger** | tunger@urnerbarry.com

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 Joseph Muldowney, Publisher

Farewell!

All good things must come to an end. And after 18 years we're saying goodbye to Urner Barry's Reporter.



"Ray Porter" was a part of the team in 2009

Our subscribers have come to know and love the Reporter for its deep market dives, company highlights and spotlight interviews. But believe it or not the publication was born from Urner Barry's Price Current, which in the early 2000s was a popular outlet for advertisers at events. Seeing the value in offering advertising for our customers, as well as sharing meaningful industry information, Urner Barry launched the Reporter magazine in 2006.

Our first issue in the winter of 2006 had just four contributors that helped generate content for 24 pages.

In 2019 we proudly redesigned the cover, and in 2020—right in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic—we shot our very first original cover.



2006



2013



2019



2020

Meanwhile we had a whopping 23 contributors in this final 64-page issue! The growth in people involved not only expanded the page count, but brought new and engaging ideas to the paper.



Anyone who has picked up a recent issue of the magazine knows that it's so much more than an advertising platform. And long-time subscribers will likely agree that the Reporter has evolved into a must-read for those looking to stay up to date on what's going on in red meat, eggs, poultry and seafood.



Thank you to all the advertisers and subscribers throughout the years who helped make the Reporter an informative and unique reading experience!

The entire staff—from the designers and copy editors, to those in production—have poured their heart and soul into this publication. And while we may be bidding adieu, the insights, interviews and more that you've come to know and love will continue with the merger of Urner Barry and Mintec. Big things are coming this year and we're excited for what the future may hold. [UB](#)

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