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Opportunities for U.S. Agricultural Products in Morocco

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Executive Summary

In 2023, Morocco was the second-largest export market for U.S. agriculture on the African continent, importing over \$610 million in U.S. agricultural products, accounting for over 16 percent of all U.S. exports to Africa. The United States has seen total exports quadruple and agricultural exports double since entering into a free-trade agreement (FTA) with Morocco in 2006.¹ The United States-Morocco FTA (USMFTA) is the only U.S. FTA on the African continent. It provides reliable market access and transshipment opportunities to use Morocco to reach other African countries. The United States was Morocco's third-largest agricultural product supplier in 2023 and has historically been in the top five. Morocco is a net importer of agricultural products and predominantly imports bulk commodities and raw materials from the United States, although opportunities for intermediate and consumer-oriented products exist because of Morocco's robust food processing sector and expanding consumer demand.

Macroeconomic Indicators

Morocco is a fast-growing developing economy in North Africa. Gross domestic product per capita (Purchasing Power Parity constant 2021 international \$) is back to pre-pandemic times at \$8,782.² Morocco's population in 2023 was 37.8 million, 35 percent of which lived in rural areas, lower than the global average of 39 percent. The population growth rate is approximately 1 percent per year with an estimated 66 percent of the population between the ages of 15 and 64 years old. The middle class is steadily increasing, and family size is decreasing with an average of 3-4 children per household. Islam is the prevailing religion (97 percent) and Arabic the dominant language, although increasing pursuit of a wider range of international partners has stressed the importance of English language training. A number of Moroccan business and government representatives speak fluent English in addition to French and Arabic.

¹ Office of the United States Trade Representative: [Trade Agreements; Morocco FTA; Final Text](#).

² World Bank Group: [GDP per capita, PPP \(constant 2021 international \\$\) – Morocco](#). July 2024.

Table 1: Morocco’s Top Agricultural Suppliers

<i>Partner</i>	<i>2019</i>	<i>2020</i>	<i>2021</i>	<i>2022</i>	<i>2023</i>	<i>2023 Market Share</i>	<i>5-Year Growth Rates</i>	<i>2019/23 % Δ</i>
Total Imports	5,689	6,624	7,711	9,819	9,701		16%	71%
<i>EU 27</i>	1,973	2,537	2,825	4,340	4,146	43%	22%	110%
<i>Brazil</i>	517	698	765	1,124	1,465	15%	29%	183%
<i>United States</i>	316	511	677	640	727	7%	21%	130%
<i>Argentina</i>	718	568	811	1,199	562	6%	3%	-22%
<i>Canada</i>	265	427	464	460	522	5%	15%	97%
Rest of World	1,900	1,883	2,169	2,056	2,280	24%	5%	20%

Source: Trade Data Monitor; BICO-HS6

Moroccan Imports

Morocco’s top agricultural product suppliers over the past five years are the EU, Brazil, the United States, Argentina, and Canada (see Table 1). Morocco’s agricultural product imports have grown steadily over the past five years. The top supplier –by a large margin– of agricultural goods to Morocco has historically been the European Union and it had a growing market share thanks to steep increases in 2022 and 2023 compared to the prior three years. Wheat is Morocco’s largest agricultural import overall, importing \$1.9 billion total, with the EU making up 71 percent of that import market, or \$1.3 billion in 2023. The second-largest import from the EU was dairy products (\$430 million), representing an 82-percent market share of total Moroccan dairy product imports in 2023. Morocco’s other top imports in 2023 were sugars and sweeteners (\$1.0 billion), corn (\$720 million), soybean oil (\$595 million), and dairy products (\$526 million). Brazil is Morocco’s second-largest agricultural supplier, ahead of the United States. Brazil’s exports experienced steady and fast growth, especially over the last two years, outpacing U.S. export growth and reaching a market share of 15 percent, more than double the U.S. share.

United States and Morocco

The U.S. agricultural export market share in Morocco has averaged a 4-percent annual growth rate over the past five years and in 2023 reached 7 percent. The United States has not been as price competitive as other suppliers, as geographic distance adds to higher freight/shipping costs. However, Morocco’s

food sector is largely market driven and responds to consumer demands, and those consumers appreciate product information. The United States can benefit greatly from marketing strategies and sharing knowledge about U.S. products and businesses.

Select Products – Growth and Competitors

The United States has seen some loss in brand preferences caused by Morocco’s FTAs with the European Union and the Arab League. Close historic ties with Europe and the disadvantage of distance and freight costs affect U.S. agricultural exports, however consumer demand for product diversity provides opportunities for U.S. consumer-oriented products, though only on a smaller scale. Current products with good sales potential are beef and beef products, tree nuts, soybeans, rice, feed grains, dairy products, live animals, genetics, and seed potatoes. Below is a summary of import market growth over the last five years for these commodity groups, the average U.S. market share, and the primary competitors.

Beef and Beef Products

Total 2023 Morocco imports from world \$36.3 million

U.S. market share 3%

5-year percent change -1%, annual import growth rate +8%

U.S. beef and beef products currently under-perform in Morocco but have a presence and good sales potential as they are currently benefitting from a zero-percent preferential tariff. The United States was the distant third-largest supplier for beef and beef products to Morocco in 2023 with a 3-percent market share. The EU maintained the largest market share at 59 percent and Brazil was the second largest at 38 percent. Even though the U.S. market share was small, there has been strong growth over the last five years, increasing over \$1 million in imports since 2019. Given that the United States out-competes the EU in most global beef markets, there is an opportunity to gain market share in Morocco. The United States and Morocco have established import requirements for U.S. beef and beef products providing needed certainty to U.S. exporters.³ Morocco requires that all U.S. beef products have a certificate of Halal slaughter stating that animals were slaughtered according to Islamic Halal religious requirements.

Tree Nuts

Total 2023 Morocco imports from world \$252.2 million

U.S. market share 59%

5-year percent change +235%, annual import growth rate +30%

The United States is Morocco’s leading tree nut supplier with historically the highest market share. In 2023, U.S. market share was 59 percent, with a 31-percent annual growth rate over the past five years. Listed as the top product for food processing ingredients to Morocco, U.S. almonds, walnuts, and

³ United States Department of Agriculture; Foreign Agricultural Service; Global Agricultural Information Network: [Morocco-FAIRS Export Certificate Report Annual; Report Number: MO2024-0004](#); 19 April 2024.

pistachios have a well-established presence in the market and maintain strong growth potential. U.S. almonds are Morocco’s top tree nut import product while pecans and hazelnuts are present in the market but have not reached their full potential. Marketing and buyer/seller relations are key to developing this market, as the demand exists for these products.⁴

Live Animals & Genetics

Total 2023 Morocco imports from world \$93.4 million

U.S. market share 6%

5-year percent change +135%, annual import growth rate +32%

In 2023, the United States had a 6 percent market share of live animals (\$4.7 million), and bovine genetics (\$762,000) imports in Morocco, the only other significant supplier besides the EU which had an 83 percent market share (\$77.6 million). Over the past five years, however, the United States is the only consistent supplier to see an annual growth rate (32 percent) as the EU has a negative 7 percent growth rate and Canada a negative 26 percent annual growth rate. Brazil and Uruguay may be competition with the United States for an import market share of 5 percent each for the first time in 2023.

Planting Seeds

Total 2023 Morocco imports from world \$138.8 million

U.S. market share 3%

New opportunities starting in 2024

In 2023, Morocco imported \$4.9 million (3 percent market share) in planting seeds from the United States. Top U.S. competitors are the EU (30 percent market share), China (9 percent), Kenya (9 percent), Guatemala (9 percent), Peru (8 percent), and Chile (7 percent). Most notable in planting seeds is that in May of 2024, the Government of Morocco opened trade for U.S. seed potatoes for the first time after agreeing to import requirements during the Plant Health Bilateral Meetings between USDA’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Services and Morocco’s sanitary authority. This newly opened U.S. market assists Morocco in diversifying planting potatoes for potato chip and french fry production. U.S. industry estimates seed potato export potential to be approximately \$8 million or a 9 percent market share. In 2023, Morocco imported \$42 million in seed potatoes from the EU.⁵ Morocco does not import GE planting seeds and all planting seed imports require a “GMO-free certificate” for customs clearance.

⁴ United States Department of Agriculture; Foreign Agricultural Service; Global Agricultural Information Network: [Morocco: Food Processing Ingredients; Report Number: MO2023-0003](#); 22 March 2023.

⁵ United States Department of Agriculture; Foreign Agricultural Service; Global Agricultural Information Network: [New Export Opportunities for US Seed Potatoes; Report Number: MO2024-0007](#); 03 June 2024.

Challenges and Opportunities for U.S. Export Growth

Morocco's stable market, openness to trade, and growing economy attract businesses and institutions, making it a hub for product distribution across the African continent. One of the top food processing sectors in Morocco is the dairy sector. U.S. dairy products have access to the Moroccan market but are not present in significant quantities. However, Morocco is looking to expand its dairy processing sector and is expected to fill the gap between local production and imports.

As Morocco develops economically and becomes less price sensitive there is potential for U.S. rice to gain market share. Moroccan rice millers continue to be interested in U.S. rice but are cognizant of the higher prices compared to Indian rice. Morocco continues to develop its domestic food manufacturing sector, and there may be opportunities for the United States to supply ingredients such as tree nuts, additives, flours, proteins, and others. Even though Morocco does not import GE planting seeds, it does allow crucial GE product imports for the livestock and poultry sectors.⁶ Cold chain infrastructure exists in country, but outside of Moroccan borders, African infrastructure remains underdeveloped. Lack of cold chain infrastructure is an obstacle that exporters should consider when determining if Morocco is an adequate re-export access point for certain commodities.

Outside of cold chain disadvantages, the African Union has been working to open trade across borders including establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) focused on four basic freedoms: the freedom of movement of people, capital, goods, and services.⁷ Morocco ratified the agreement in 2019 and has prioritized roads and modern infrastructure development for ports, airports, and rail links. Transportation investment dominates the infrastructure investments, taking up 68 percent of total government expenditure so far.⁸ Historically, Morocco has had strong ties in agricultural trade with the EU, Brazil, the United States, and Argentina. Morocco has preferential trade agreements with 62 countries, including the EU-Morocco Association Agreement which includes duty-free access for limited quantities of some agricultural products including, but not limited to, seafood, fruits, and vegetables. Negotiations for a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement between the European Union and Morocco are ongoing. Morocco is also in negotiations with Canada, the South American trading bloc Mercosur, and the Arab League for free trade agreements and free trade areas.⁹

⁶ United States Department of Agriculture; Foreign Agricultural Service; Global Agricultural Information Network: [Agricultural Biotechnology Annual; Report Number: MO2023-0019](#); 13 November 2023.

⁷ Economic Social & Cultural Council: [ECOSOCC holds inaugural media sensitization forum on the Free Movement Protocol and 3rd FMP Forum](#); 01 December 2022.

⁸ United States Department of Commerce: International Trade Administration: [Morocco Country Commercial Guide; Infrastructure](#); 01 January 2024.

⁹ United States Department of Commerce: International Trade Administration: [Morocco Country Commercial Guide; Country Commercial Guide](#); 01 January 2024.



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