

# U.S. FOODLINK

The bi-monthly newsletter for importers of U.S. foods

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## Options Abound for Confectionery in South America

There's growing demand for high-quality confectionery products in South America, and U.S. firms are well-positioned to take advantage of this opportunity.

The growth is being driven in part by two free trade agreements: the Dominican Republic-Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR) and the U.S.-Panama Trade Promotion Agreement. These stimulated overall agricultural exports to Latin America in particular, including confectionery.

The COVID-19 pandemic slowed down export growth in these regions, but the markets have recovered and growing populations, particularly among the middle class, are creating a healthy demand for more confectionery goods.

Additionally, due to the trade agreements, most confectionery exports to CAFTA-DR and Panama are not subject to tariffs. This is expected to create opportunities for U.S. companies to increase their overall market share.

One market to keep an eye on is Panama, which was the sixth-largest destination for U.S. confectionery exports in 2023, at \$22.85 million, according to USDA data. While this is only a small share of the overall \$696.30 million confectionery market in the country, its size is expected to grow 5.37% between 2024 and 2028, according to Statista.

*(Continued on page 2)*



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## Options Abound for Confectionery in South America *Continued*

The rise of the middle class is a major factor. The number of households making at least \$20,000 rose by 500,000 to 5.3 million between 2021 and 2024, filling the market with families who have more disposable income.

Growth is also being driven by a rising urban population, which swelled 10% between 2021 and 2024, according to USDA. City dwellers tend to be more pressed for time than their rural counterparts and turn to confectionery products for a quick snack. Chocolate candy, sweet biscuits, snack bars, and fruit snacks are expected to be particularly popular.

Latin America in general tends to be influenced by North American and European taste trends, according to Innova Marketing Insights. With this in mind, products that feature nuts and fruit are expected to be popular among chocolate confectionery. Nuts are a top flavor category, with less common varieties gaining in popularity though staple tree nuts remain at the top. Fruit is also diversifying, and Innova highlighted peach, mango and passion fruit as popular options.

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Manufacturers looking to market nut-based confections in South America may want to keep an eye on Chile. While that country isn't a top export destination for U.S. confections, it was the tenth-largest consumer of U.S. tree nuts in 2022, according to USDA. Almonds accounted for 75% of these sales, and Chileans favor them as an ingredient in confectionery.

Fruit remains the top flavor in sugar confectionery, but Innova noted that indulgent flavors such as cake, cookie, dairy and vanilla are experiencing rapid growth. Staple fruit flavors like strawberry, orange and lemon remain favorites, but alternatives like pineapple, apple, peach and raspberry have gained increasing global favor over the

past several years.

Chocolate manufacturers, in particular, will need to keep an eye on prices no matter where they seek to export their products. Cocoa yields in Africa have been low due to an ongoing El Nino weather pattern, which is negatively impacting moisture and causing the availability of cocoa to drop.

Both excessive rainfall, which leads to delayed harvests and disease, and dryness, which can stunt the crop, can have an impact on the final price of chocolate confections. The cost of materials, labor and transportation are also on the rise.

While the middle class is growing in many South American countries, price may be an issue. The pressure on cocoa is a global concern, but less established brands may have trouble gaining a foothold if customers are choosing to purchase their favorites when prices get too high.

In some markets, the quality associated with U.S. products may help them win out. USDA noted that consumers in the Northern Triangle region of Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador associate snack and confectionery products from the U.S. with quality, reliability and taste.

Chocolate is particularly popular around holidays in this region, and continued urbanization is expected to create new opportunities for U.S. manufacturers.

Exporters should also be aware of U.S. brands who have developed their own footholds in some South American countries. One recent example is Ferrara, which acquired Brazil sweets and snacks company Dori Alimentos in September 2023. The candy producer could use its newfound domestic production and distribution capability to expand in the country.

However, this doesn't mean other manufacturers should be left out. Mitsue Konishi, head food sector analyst at GlobalData, told *Just Food* that Brazilian consumers have a preference for American confections. While large companies with a presence in the country have the advantage, a country like Brazil is large enough to hold opportunities for everyone.

# Foodservice resilient, but inflation adds pressure



The global foodservice market has rebounded from the pandemic and is resilient, according to Technomic. However, global uncertainty and price sensitivity will define what consumers look for on their menus.

While the U.S. is the biggest foodservice market, more than 75% of total industry sales come from elsewhere in the world, according to Technomic data. As a result, there are plenty of opportunities for manufacturers to export items for menus across the globe.

Shoppers are expected to become divided between those that seek out high-end offerings and those that want value from their dining experiences. As a result, food menus that seek to offer a middle ground between the two are expected to become less popular.

Restaurant operators aren't immune to these pressures, either. Businesses concerned about maintaining cash margins will focus on promoting higher-yield items and products that can be applied across the menu. Ingredients and processed foods that can fit into these slots may be popular.

However, this doesn't mean restaurants won't be looking for interesting items. Technomic noted that foodservice companies still want to create excitement and draw in consumers, which means they will no doubt be looking for new items to add to their menus.

The average restaurant chain has added 19 items to its menu over the past year, with the U.K., Japan and China being the leaders among foodservice operators who focus on product innovation and new item introductions.

Manufacturers should also be aware of any environmentally friendly aspects of their supply chain, which could make their products more appealing to some foodservice companies. Consumers are concerned with social and environmental responsibility and will turn to brands that limit waste and support green initiatives.

Technomic highlighted the Philippines, Indonesia, India and Thailand as the countries with the most environmentally conscious foodservice consumers.



## Mid-year export trends take form

Thus far in 2024, U.S. food export trends reveal diverse shifts across multiple sectors.

The overall U.S. trade deficit increased slightly in early 2024 – growing from \$67.6 billion in January to nearly \$69 billion a month later – with imports outpacing exports, which could potentially impact the competitive stance of U.S. food products abroad, according to the Bureau of Economic Analysis.

As noted in an April 15 report by the World Bank, compared to two weeks earlier, the agricultural and export price indices closed 3% higher and 8% higher, respectively. The export price index continues to be driven by increasing cocoa and coffee arabica prices. Changes in planting strategies in response to economic factors like biofuel demand could affect the types and volumes of agricultural exports from the U.S.

Despite a general decrease in beef production due to reduced cattle supplies, beef exports have exceeded expectations due to strong international demand. The shortfall in beef production is being offset by increased pork and broiler outputs, per USDA reports.

U.S. beef exports in February were 244 million pounds, almost 3% above the same-period shipments last year and higher than expectations. This prompted a 20-million-pound increase of the first-quarter export forecast to 740 million pounds.

These trends suggest 2024 will largely be a year of adaptation within the U.S. food export sector.



# news briefs

**Food manufacturers and restaurant chains have found a new market – sauces.** Sauces and condiments are crowding consumers' refrigerators and pantries as the personalization of food that sauces offers coupled with contemporary convenience to source it means more sauces for more cuisines are available than ever before, reported *The Wall Street Journal*.

**Sales of chocolate and candy reached an all-time high of \$48 billion in 2023,** according to the 2024 State of Treating report by the National Confectioners Association. While that sales figure was largely driven by inflation, consumers continue to embrace chocolate and candy for special occasions.

**As cocoa prices continue to climb, the demand for chocolate remains strong as ever.** Concerns over the supply of cocoa from West Africa – home to three quarters of the world's production – have driven the market higher, prompting brands like Hershey to issue profit warnings and that investors should expect limited earnings, reported *CNBC*.



**Inflation hurt seafood sales in 2023, but preparing seafood at home has grown increasingly popular since the COVID-19 pandemic,** according to FMI - The Food Industry Association's Power of Seafood 2024 report. Sales revenue for seafood declined 3.1% to \$18.9 billion in 2023, reported *Seafood Source*.

**Recent medical studies have linked the consumption of several substances on California's banned list to serious health problems.** Recorded health issues include cancer, hyperactivity, and neurological disruptions, reported *The Food Institute*.



**Approximately four in 10 consumers worldwide find health and wellbeing nutritional products too expensive, according to a new report by Nutiani.** Additionally, one-third of all surveyed consumers feel rising costs have made it hard to continue purchasing healthy products.

**About 81% of shoppers say it's important to them to purchase clean-label food products, according to a new study by Acosta Group.** The Clean Label Insights Study also found that 83% of shoppers are knowledgeable about clean-label products or have at least heard of them.

**The U.S. is among the world's top four biggest cheese-loving countries, according to new research by Mintel.** Approximately 96% of Americans say they eat cheddar. Meanwhile, The Netherlands is by far the most cheese-crazed nation.

**Extreme weather in Louisiana has endangered the crawfish season.**

Drought conditions over the summer overheated crawfish before farmers could harvest them, creating a dire situation that the governor has declared a disaster, reported *The New York Times*.

**A lawsuit filed in New York accuses the nation's sugar producers of colluding to**

**keep prices artificially high.** This alleged action rippled through the industry, reported *The Food Institute*.



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## A+ Berry, Inc.

Lincoln, Nebraska

A+ Berry is a Big 10 food tech company based at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln that creating innovative & delicious antioxidant drinks for health. AroJuice is A+ Berry's first product, a cold-pasteurized and delicious juice made from super fruit Aronia berry grown in the American Midwest that provides the highest antioxidant protection for consumers want to improve their health through functional, innovative, low sugar, and delicious drinks in daily life, instead of medicine.

By drinking 8 oz AroJuice daily consumers will get more Natural Antioxidants + Soluble Fiber than eating 1,000 blueberries, that is 3x or more compared other healthy juices while reducing 50% or more Sugar. There is no added sugar, no preservative, no heating process. AroJuice has been sold as a super-premium functional juice to customers in over 30 states across the country.

Through a green, sustainable, and transparent production practice, A+ Berry also developed 3 other innovative antioxidant products, including AroConcentrate, AroWine, and AroPowder, all based on Midwestern superfruit Aronia berry to meet different customer needs. [aplusberry.com](http://aplusberry.com)



## Abe's Vegan Muffins

West Nyack, New York

Abe's Vegan Muffins makes delicious, school-friendly baked treats, including our beloved Chocolate Chip Mini Muffins. Our all-natural baked goods are vegan, kosher pareve, and free from common allergens including dairy, eggs, nuts (except coconut), soy, sesame, and pea protein. Made without preservatives or artificial ingredients. See why Abe's is the fastest-growing vegan and allergy-friendly baked goods brand in the U.S.! Learn more about our story and see ingredients and nutrition facts at [abesmuffins.com](http://abesmuffins.com). Shipped freshly frozen from our facility in New York. Distributed by Aero-Cos International. [aerocos.com](http://aerocos.com)



## Liberty Orchards

Marlboro, New Jersey

Liberty Orchards has been making America's favorite fruit and nut candies for over 100 years!

Hand crafted in small batches, our products are made with all-natural fruits and premium nuts and are vegan, kosher, and certified gluten-free. Over the years we have created a range of flavors, including sugar-free and nut-free candies, sure to satisfy everyone's sweet tooth. With no artificial colors, flavors, or preservatives, our candies are a sweet treat you can feel good about!

The Orchard Bar, a fruit and nut energy bar packed with real pieces of fruit, wholesome nuts and seeds, and protein soy nuggets, is available in seven delicious flavors made with non-GMO ingredients. The 1.4oz bars are perfect to take anywhere and provide a delicious burst of energy for busy people on the go! For more information, please visit [libertyorchards.info](http://libertyorchards.info). International distribution is handled by Aero-Cos International.



## Agropur Inc.

Eden Prairie, Minnesota

Agropur is a top 15 global dairy producer founded in 1938. Our U.S. cheese operations produce more than 1 billion pounds of consistent, high-quality, award-winning cheese each year under the guidance of our Wisconsin Master Cheesemakers. Our cheeses regularly earn top awards from some of the world's most prestigious contests. Able to produce more than 20 varieties, Agropur's U.S. cheese operations specialize in mozzarella, provolone, cheddar and feta. Agropur has seven SQF Certified cheese plants across the U.S. along with international support. "Exceptional Cheese. Expert Solutions."

[agropur.com/us/cheese](http://agropur.com/us/cheese) | [agropur.com/us](http://agropur.com/us)

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## The Bites Company

*Westport, Connecticut*

Better for You snacking has never tasted this good! Unforgettably Delicious and Addictive, The Bites Company biscotti Bites are baked twice for that extra special crunch yet maintain a super smooth texture. Made with organic and clean non-GMO ingredients. Certified Baystate Organic, Kof K Kosher, low sodium, low calorie, peanut free (produced in our peanut free and tree nut free facility) and no preservatives. International Distribution is handled by Aero-Cos International. For further information, email [info@aeroco.com](mailto:info@aeroco.com)



## Bobby Sue's Nuts

*Chappaqua, New York*

"Nuts with a mission!" This whole journey started with Barb Kobren, a.k.a. BobbySue, wracking her brain to find a way to do more for homeless animals. In 2008, BobbySue took her family's age-old, savory and sweet nuts recipe and went from store, to market, to airline, winning over hearts and taste buds, and turned her home-baked idea into a national brand – all while donating funds from sales to build modern animal shelters and support legal protection laws. BobbySue ensures every pecan, cashew, and almond is handled with the utmost care and roasted perfectly to meet her sky-high standards of flavor and quality. Please reach out to us at [getnuts@bobbysuesnuts.com](mailto:getnuts@bobbysuesnuts.com) with sales inquiries and visit [bobbysuesnuts.com](http://bobbysuesnuts.com) to learn more about our innovative flavors and mission.



## Brooklyn Food Group

*Marlboro, New Jersey*

Brooklyn Food Group produces an authentic NY bagel made with the finest ingredients using a proprietary process and of course utilizing NY water. NY water contains a far lower amount of calcium carbonate and other minerals. The result is a bagel world renowned for its flavor, taste, and aroma. Best of all these bagels have a frozen shelf life of 24 months. The individual wrapped have a 45-day shelf life after being thawed. Offered in a variety of 13 flavors and formulations Brooklyn Food Group brings a Taste of NY to your customers. \*\*International distribution by Aero Cos International. Available with Kosher and Halal certification.



## Federated Group, Inc.

*Arlington Heights, Illinois*

Life Every Day Ready-To-Eat Cereals by Federated Foods – Life Every Day offers an assortment of delicious cereals that are perfect for breakfast, snacks or as an ingredient in your favorite recipe. Available in Frosted Flakes, Crispy Rice, Corn Flakes, Raisin Bran, Fruit Whirls, Toasted Oats and Honey Nut Toasted Oats varieties, you will be sure to find a favorite. We combine great taste and convenience with an affordable price to make Life Every Day the products you'll love! Buy Life Every Day products with confidence that their quality will meet or exceed the national brands! Look for the Double Quality Guarantee on all our products! For more information, please visit our website at [my-lifeeveryday.com](http://my-lifeeveryday.com).

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## Fry Krisp Food Products Inc.

*Jackson, Michigan*

Fry Krisp Food Products' Lemon Pepper Breeding is a tantalizing blend of zesty lemon and aromatic pepper, perfect for elevating any dish to culinary excellence. Crafted with care, this breeding infuses a burst of vibrant citrus flavor complemented by the subtle warmth of pepper, creating a harmonious balance of tangy and savory notes. Its fine texture ensures a crispy coating, sealing in moisture and enhancing the juiciness of meats, poultry, or seafood. Whether frying, baking, or air-frying, Fry Krisp's Lemon Pepper Breeding delivers consistent, mouthwatering results every time. Versatile and easy to use on classic favorites like fried chicken, fish fillets, or even vegetable tempura. With Fry Krisp's commitment to quality and flavor, each bite is a culinary delight, promising a memorable dining experience that delights the senses and leaves taste buds craving more. [frykrisp.com](http://frykrisp.com)



## Love Your Health Foods, LLC

*Grand Rapids, Michigan*

As the U.S. market leader in Dry Roasting Soynuts for over 3 decades, we are the only genuine Dry Roasted Soynut manufacturer in North America. Processing Premium Quality, Organic and non-GMO Soynuts is all we do. The American Diet has changed permanently to one that focuses on the health benefits and/or hazards of the foods we eat. Delivering 12 grams of nearly pristine Soy protein per ounce, there is no food source on this planet with more definitive and profound health benefits than Soy. Processed in high-temperature ovens, we create a true roasted nut that most genuinely parallels the quality of other nuts—crunchy, nutty and full of flavor! With a very lengthy shelf life, our Soynuts are targeted to mainstream, vegetarian, and vegan consumers who search out Protein food alternatives. As a great nut-free snack, salad topper, trail mix addition, nutritional, power bar or baking component, they are the Gold Standard by which Soynuts are measured! [loveyourhealthsnacks.com](http://loveyourhealthsnacks.com)

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## Ma Ka Khana LLC dba Bebe's All Natural

*Edison, New Jersey*

As Indian cuisine takes center stage, we provide a solution to the everyday consumer dilemma. For those always on the go, struggling to find time for the cherished home-cooked meals their Mom or Grandma used to prepare, we've got you covered. Catering to a generation embracing Indian food and flavors, we're here for those eager to try their hand at cooking but are time-pressed and unsure where to start. Enter Bebe's All Natural cooking simmer sauces — just sauté proteins, vegetables, lentils, or beans, add & mix with our masalas. Faster, easier, and tastier food is just a step away, and our affordable masalas pave the way!

100% Vegan | All Natural | Gluten Free | Ready to eat | Convenience item | Shelf stable | Indian Cuisine | Multiple Use | Fuses well with international cuisines, can be used as a: Dip, Marinade, Simmer Sauce | No Added Sugars | No Added Preservatives | No Fillers | No chemicals clean label | 12.5 oz glass jars/Flex spouted pouches | @Bebesallnatural | [Bebesallnatural@gmail.com](mailto:Bebesallnatural@gmail.com) | USA | +18482286707 [BebesAllNatural.com](http://BebesAllNatural.com)



## Rose Sisters Brands, Inc. dba Rose Sisters Chips

*Bridgeport, Connecticut*

We manufacture unique, freshly baked, savory, and seasoned breakable flour tortillas. A chip, cracker, and flatbread all in one. Our seasoned baked flour tortilla chips bring eating experiences to life. They cause wide eyes and even wider smiles. Robust, crunchy, flaky, savory, and memorable. This is not mindless snacking ... everyone remembers the first time they try our chips and every time after that is just as meaningful.

Each bag contains three full round gourmet, seasoned, savory, baked flour tortillas. Our Original Family Recipe (Savory) was created four generations ago. Two sizes: Family Sharing (9" tortillas — 7.09oz) and Snacking (7" tortillas — 4.33oz). Continuing the tradition and providing memorable, healthier, and unique flavors, our Mesquite BBQ with just a touch of heat is for those who enjoy a robust smoky and pepper taste with just a little lasting mild heat! Available only in snacking size.

Break the tortillas in the bag to create your own chips and crackers. Delectable on their own with their unique taste and texture experience. Also pairs very nicely with dips, salsa, guac, hummus, cheese, charcuterie, tapas, soups, salads, and so much more.

Woman-Owned | Kosher | Vegetarian | Nut and Seed Free | No Cholesterol | No Trans Fats | Low Carbs | Baked — Never Fried | [info@rosesisterschips.com](mailto:info@rosesisterschips.com) | [@rosesisterschips](https://www.facebook.com/rosesisterschips) [@rosesisterschips](https://www.instagram.com/rosesisterschips) [rosesisterschips.com](https://www.tiktok.com/@rosesisterschips)



## Show-Me BBQ Sauce, LLC

*Rocheport, Missouri*

For nearly five decades, Show-Me® Bar-B-Q Sauce has shown that a few simple ingredients can deliver everything but a simple taste – growing its reputation through mostly word-of-mouth. Rooted in the heart of Missouri, our three sauces and five seasonings are Midwest staples with a reach across kitchens in 50 states, 11 countries, and numerous military bases – thanks largely to our loyal fans sharing their love for our flavors. Our no-refrigeration-needed formula and guaranteed shelf-stability ensure that everyone from backyard grillers and BBQ pitmasters to cooking enthusiasts everywhere can savor our classic taste. At Show-Me®, culinary exploration meets tradition in every bottle, blending authentic bold tastes with the joy of cooking. As a family-owned business, we understand what's truly important transcends beyond any language or cultural barrier – spending time with loved ones eating well. We craft it, but food lovers create the unforgettable moments.

No Refrigeration | Gluten-Free | No Added Preservatives | No Added Fillers



## Three Little Pigs, Inc.

*New York, New York*

Three Little Pigs is on a mission to create more enjoyable, everyday moments through casual, well-made charcuterie that is as approachable as it is high-quality and delicious. Since 1975 it has become one of the most awarded specialty food companies in North America, winning a critical acclaim and over 21 national food awards.

With a commitment to making all-natural products using high-quality ingredients in time-honored recipes, free from artificial ingredients or preservatives, Three Little Pigs offers a wide range of French charcuterie and snacks that are as gourmet as they are accessible. Some of Three Little Pigs' most well-known products include their Mousse de Foie de Canard au Porto, Petit Toasts, Bread & Butter Cornichons, Prosciutto & Gruyère Sous-vide Egg Bites, as well as their Rillettes de Canard and Jambon de Paris. Bon Appétit!



## Totally Hook'd

*Gloucester, Massachusetts*

Totally Hook'd is a small family business located in Gloucester, MA that believes what you feed your pets should be just as nutritious and delicious as what you feed yourself. That's why we've created all-natural, 1-ingredient treats made of whole minnows, scallops, krill, and herring that are the perfect healthy snack for your cats and dogs. And to ensure they receive the best possible nutrition, our treats have no preservatives or additives, just the fish! Not only that, but our products are also freeze-dried, a process that retains up to 97% of the ingredient's nutritional value and maintains the product's physical integrity. This creates a highly nutritious, aromatic, and delicious-tasting treat with a non-oily, dry crispy texture that has the same shape and color as its original form. By combining these elements, using Totally Hook'd Treats means giving your furry friend the best nature has to offer!

[totallyhookd.com](http://totallyhookd.com)



## What's New Buckaroo and Company, LLC

*Evanston, Illinois*

Welcome to the exciting world of Rollicking Buckaroo Pepper Jam and Seasoning Blends, where flavor knows no bounds, and culinary creativity runs wild!

At Rollicking Buckaroo, we're not just selling products; we're crafting experiences that ignite taste buds and elevate your culinary journey. Whether you're a dedicated food enthusiast, a passionate chef, or a discerning business owner in the buyers, wholesale, or foodservice industry, we invite you to embark on a flavor-filled adventure with us.

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