U.S. FCODLINK

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As global markets face an increasingly complex environment, marked by economic uncertainties and shifting consumer demands, the food and beverage (F&B) sector must stay adaptable and forward-thinking. U.S. companies involved in exports are well-positioned to leverage these evolving trends to remain competitive and drive growth. Here are four major trends that are set to shape the industry in 2025 and the years to come.

Redefined Health and Wellness

Worldwide interest in health and wellness is evolving as GLP-1 weight-loss medications like Ozempic and Zepbound gain popularity. These drugs have triggered a shift in consumer focus toward monitoring blood sugar and hormonal balance, two essential health metrics for GLP-1 users. This presents a prime opportunity for U.S. exporters to cater to international markets that are increasingly embracing the concept of "food as medicine."

According to Mintel's 2025 Global Food and Drink Trends report, functional food ingredients are also taking center stage, with consumers increasingly demanding foods that deliver tangible health benefits. Products featuring nutrients (Continued on page 2)





4 Food and Beverage Trends Continued



such as protein, fiber, and vitamins appeal not only to health-focused consumers but also to those who want straightforward labeling that communicates these benefits clearly.

Beyond weight-loss drugs, the general trend towards functional foods is set to grow. Consumers are looking for nutrient-dense products that fit into holistic wellness routines. U.S. exporters can capitalize on this by developing low-glycemic products and health-focused foods that resonate with international consumers, particularly those seeking preventive health benefits without the complexity of specialized supplements.

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Competing Consumer Priorities

While many of today's consumers are health-conscious, plenty of others prioritize indulgence and convenience, and all three areas are somewhat important to most, a phenomenon that can result in a paradoxical mix of conflicting preferences. Mintel's report dubs this trend "rule rebellion," where consumers feel free to break traditional dietary rules, signaling a more flexible approach that balances indulgences with healthy options, giving rise to products like high-protein brownies and superfoodenhanced candy bars.

This trend extends beyond individual preferences to encompass broader market dynamics influenced by inflation and supply chain constraints. Global consumers are increasingly seeking value without sacrificing quality. The convenience sector, particularly online grocery shopping, has expanded rapidly, with platforms like Instacart and DoorDash now accepting SNAP benefits, paving the way for more widespread adoption of delivery services. For U.S. exporters, expanding partnerships with e-commerce platforms could be a strategic move to increase accessibility and visibility of products in international markets.

This blend of priorities is also reflected in the rising demand for affordable premium offerings. As income disparities increase, particularly in emerging markets like Vietnam, consumers are drawn to cost-effective yet high-quality products. Ready-to-eat meals and snacks that can provide both value and a premium feel to consumers can help U.S. exporters tap into these growing markets.

Food-Tech Advancements

The global F&B industry is increasingly driven by technological innovations aimed at addressing climate change, food insecurity, and evolving consumer demands. Regenerative agriculture is one such trend, emphasizing sustainable farming techniques to restore soil health and biodiversity. U.S. companies can capitalize on this by offering products sourced from regenerative practices, which are particularly appealing in markets that prioritize sustainability.

Similarly, the growth of the alternative-protein and precision-fermentation sectors may pose new opportunities for differentiation. As consumers become more open to exploring non-traditional protein sources, including plant-based products, cultivated meat, and even proteins derived

from edible insects, there is room for U.S. exporters to introduce these products into markets where demand for ethical and sustainable options is high.

The use of 3D printing technology in food production is another area of rapid advancement, with companies developing innovative products like plant-based seafood and meat alternatives. These technologies offer a new level of customization, allowing companies to adapt flavors and textures to suit the preferences of specific markets. This adaptability could provide U.S. exporters with a unique advantage as they expand into diverse international regions.

sectors. Walmart, for example, is increasingly using automation in its distribution centers, a trend that other large-scale exporters will undoubtedly follow. Automated systems can not only reduce labor costs but also enable companies to handle larger volumes with greater precision. For U.S. exporters looking for potential growth opportunities next year, automation can provide a competitive edge by increasing operational flexibility and reducing time to market.

As we look toward 2025, these four trends highlight the





Al Integration and Automation

As the global F&B industry faces widespread supply chain disruptions, labor shortages, and increasing operational costs, generative artificial intelligence (AI) and automation are becoming essential tools for efficiency and cost reduction for companies. Mintel's report underscores how AI is transforming everything from product development to inventory management. For U.S. exporters, investing in AI-driven logistics and supply chain management can mitigate risks associated with shipping delays and other global challenges.

In the retail and restaurant sectors, AI-powered technologies are already enhancing customer experiences. Quick-service restaurants are beginning to implement AI at drive-thrus, enabling them to optimize order processing and reduce wait times. Additionally, AI can streamline backend operations, such as predicting inventory needs and adjusting for seasonal variations in demand. As more companies integrate AI into their processes, the potential for further innovation is substantial, and U.S. exporters that adopt these technologies will likely enjoy improved efficiency and responsiveness to global market shifts.

This automation is not limited to retail and restaurants either; it's also transforming the logistics and warehousing

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need for adaptability and innovation within the global F&B sector. By aligning with these evolving consumer priorities and leveraging cutting-edge technologies, U.S. exporters can position themselves for success in a competitive international market.



From Generic to Gourmet: The Evolution of Private Labels in Food and Beverage

Private-label items, once perceived as generic and low-cost alternatives to national brands, have evolved into sophisticated, high-quality products that cater to diverse consumer preferences and lifestyles. This evolution is not only reshaping the domestic market but also creating significant opportunities for U.S. companies in the global food export sector.

Private-label products, also known as store brands, have seen remarkable growth in recent years. In 2022, private-label food and drink sales in the U.S. increased by 15.5% according to data from Mintel, capturing a 19.2% share of total food and drink sales. This growth is driven by several factors, including rising grocery prices, changing consumer behaviors, and strategic initiatives by retailers to enhance their private-label offerings.

One of the most notable trends in the private-label segment is the shift towards premiumization. Retailers are developing premium private-label brands that offer high-quality, innovative, and exclusive products. This shift is transforming the perception of private labels from budget-friendly alternatives to desirable, aspirational brands. For instance, Walmart's launch of the Uniquely J line targets urban Millennials with eco-friendly and socially conscious products, featuring plant-based ingredients and USDA Organic and Fair Trade certifications.

Consumer Preferences and Market Dynamics

Consumer preferences are at the heart of the private-label boom. Shoppers are increasingly seeking products that offer the best overall value, combining affordability with high quality. According to recent surveys, 83% of consumers view private brands as a better value for their money than national brands, and 85% perceive private brand quality as equal to or better than national brands. Additionally, 94% of consumers believe private brands are just as good or better at offering products that fit their lifestyles.

This consumer confidence is reflected in the performance of private-label products across various categories. For example, private brand units have seen significant growth in salad dressing (+6%), salty snacks (+4%), wraps and tortilla shells (+12.1%), and dips and spreads (+3.2%), often outperforming national brands in these segments, according to data from Nielsen.

Several key trends are driving the growth and evolution of the private-label segment, including:

Sustainability and Ethical Sourcing: Consumers, especially younger shoppers, are increasingly concerned about the environmental and social impact of their purchases. Mintel noted that 30% of shoppers aged 18-34 would purchase more store-brand products that featured sustainable sourcing.

Consumers are increasingly concerned about the environmental and social impact of their purchases. Private labels are responding by



incorporating sustainable and ethically sourced ingredients. Lynsey Walker, Registered Holistic Nutritionist and VP of Marketing & Communications at the Canadian Health Food Association noted, "One area where we're seeing significant growth in the private-label segment is the inclusion of third-party endorsements, such as Whole Foods' 365 line supporting Fairtrade International and Rainforest Alliance.

Health and Wellness: There's also a growing demand for healthier, nutrient-dense foods. Approximately 83% of consumers are looking to live a healthier lifestyle, and 70% are putting more effort into selecting healthier foods. Private labels are capitalizing on this trend by offering products with functional ingredients that promote health and wellness.

Convenience and Innovation: The fast-paced lives of modern consumers are driving demand for convenient, ready-to-eat meals and snacks. Private labels are focusing on 'on-the-go' food products and innovative packaging solutions to meet this demand. The use of flexible packaging such as wraps, films, and pouches is becoming increasingly popular.

Culinary Diversity: The influence of global cuisine is evident in the private label segment. Consumers are seeking bold and dynamic flavor pairings that reflect diverse culinary traditions. Retailers are responding by introducing products that cater to these adventurous taste buds.

The private-label food and beverage market is expected to witness considerable growth worldwide, driven by the increasing number of competitive private-label players in segments such as ready-to-eat meals and healthy snacks.

Millennials, who are a significant driving force behind the growth of the ready-to-eat meal market, are particularly influential. In the U.S., the Millennial population is estimated to be around 75.9 million, accounting for 23.3% of the total population. This demographic's preference for convenient, high-quality food products is shaping market trends both domestically and internationally.

Strategic Considerations for U.S. Exporters

U.S. companies looking to export private-label products must, first and foremost, conduct thorough market research that provides an understanding of consumer preferences, regulatory requirements, and competitive dynamics in target markets. This will help in tailoring products to meet local demands and ensuring compliance with regulations.

In addition, form strategic partnerships with local retailers and distributors to gain market insights and enhance distribution networks. Collaborations with local brands can also help in building brand recognition and trust.

Exporters should emphasize sustainability and transparency in product sourcing and manufacturing processes. Consumers globally are increasingly valuing ethical and sustainable practices, and highlighting these aspects can differentiate products in competitive markets.

Meanwhile, exporters should also strive to develop strong marketing and branding strategies that resonate with local consumers. Highlighting the quality, value, and unique attributes of private-label products can help build consumer trust and loyalty.

The private-label segment within the food and beverage industry is experiencing significant growth and transformation. Driven by changing consumer preferences, strategic retailer initiatives, and innovative product offerings, private labels are redefining the market landscape. For U.S. companies, this presents a wealth of opportunities both domestically and internationally. By understanding market dynamics, investing in innovation, and emphasizing sustainability, U.S. exporters can capitalize on the growing demand for private-label products.

Food Export will be at these international trade shows in 2025!

Super Market Trade Show (SMTS)

Tokyo, Japan - February 12-14, 2025

Gulfood

Dubai, United Arab Emirates – February 17-21, 2025

FOODEX Japan

Tokyo, Japan – March 11-14, 2025

VIV Asia

Bangkok, Thailand – March 12-14, 2025

Expo ANTAD & Alimentaria

Guadalajara, Mexico – March 25-27, 2025

FHA-Food & Beverage

Singapore – April 8-11, 2025

ANUGA Select Brazil

Sao Paulo, Brazil – April 8-10, 2025

SIAL Canada

Toronto Canada – April 29-May 1, 2025

Zoomark International

Bologna, Italy - May 6-8, 2025

HOFEX

Hong Kong – May 14-16, 2025

SIAL China

Shanghai, China – May 19-21, 2025

Thaifex ANUGA

Bangkok, Thailand – May 27-31, 2025



Seoul Food & Hotel

Seoul, Korea - June 10-13, 2025

Food Taipei

Taipei, Taiwan – June 25-28, 2025

China Fisheries Show

Qingdao, China – September 3-5, 2025

Fine Food Australia

Sydney, Australia – September 8-11, 2025

Seafood Expo Asia

Singapore – September 11-13, 2025

Food Tech Summit & Expo

Mexico City, Mexico – October 3-4, 2025

ANUGA

Cologne, Germany – October 4-8, 2025

··· Featured U.S. Midwest & Northeast State Profiles









news briefs

U.S. dockworkers and port operators reached a deal that promptly ended their three-day strike recently.

The tentative agreement includes a wage hike of nearly 62% across six years, reported *Reuters*.

CPG companies have begun viewing single-portion meals, small snacks, and sippable soups as strategies to appeal to GLP-1 users. Executives no longer see the weight-loss drugs as an existential threat but rather a new diet to produce food for, reported *Bloomberg*.

At a recent International Foodservice Distributors
Association (IFDA) conference, stakeholders
considered Al's industry impact. Topics included supply
chain dynamics, tech-enabled safety measures, and the need
for in-person connectivity.

Consumer snacking has evolved significantly in the last few years, driven by a greater focus on nutrient density and one's emotional connection to food. This shift has accelerated the demand for healthier snacks that can offer both pleasure and functionality.

Once reserved for astronauts and the military, freeze-dried candy is now a growing trend in the confectionery market. By leveraging proprietary freeze-drying technology, one company creates highly textured candies that have garnered a devoted following.

Consumer demand is driving innovation in allergen- free candy. As the demand for allergen-free products surges, brands are moving beyond dairy and gluten-free candy to offer options that cater to a growing consumer base with multiple food allergies, reported *Confectionery News*.

Pumpkin-flavored products continue to win the hearts of shoppers, contributing to impulse purchases and growing demand, according to a report from Grocery Doppio.



The supersized sandwich is on the rise in U.K. restaurants, packing colossal amounts of carbs in every order. American-style XXL sandwiches have been gaining traction in cities like London and Edinburgh, reported *The Guardian*.

Innova Market Insights data indicates there was a 29% increase in plant-based packaging claims from July 2019 through June 2024. Dairy was the leading category, representing 23% of launches from July 2023 to June 2024, but the use of plant-based packaging also increased for other categories, such as confectionery, reported *Packaging Insights*.

Domino's "emergency pizza" deal powered a surge of orders and brought millions of new members to its loyalty program. The company spent two years fine-tuning the marketing deal to ensure profitability and that customers could not game the system, reported *The Wall Street Journal*.

Non-alcoholic beer is gaining momentum — even at the world's most famous beer festival, the original Oktoberfest in Germany. NA brews now account for 10% of the total volume at Weihenstephan, the world's oldest brewery, reported *The Associated Press*.

A Trax survey of 12,000 consumers revealed that 92% tend to stick to their favorite candy brands, while 75% take a more spontaneous approach to candy shopping. In addition, 68% of respondents said that retail store displays heavily influence their candy purchases.



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Abba Industries

Plymouth, Michigan

With established 40-plus-year-old recipes, Abba Industries offers natural, nourishing, flavorful, and functional Ginger Beverages, Concentrates, & Wellness Shots. Our best sellers include our mild Ginger Quencher, spicy Ginger Refresher, and one-of-a-kind Ginger Hibiscus flavors. Our beverages come in 12 oz (355 ml), 59 oz (1.75 L) & 5 gallon (19 L) sizes and are sold refrigerated in a variety of organic & health food stores, grocery stores, supermarkets, delis / grab & go cafes, foodservice, gas stations, colleges/universities, hotels, restaurants, brewers, distilleries and wineries. Seeking international distribution partners.

Natural | Real Ingredients | Real Taste | No Preservatives | No Artificial Colors | No Artificial Flavors | No GMO www.abbasuperstore.com



Anderson International Foods

Jersey City, New Jersey

Sincerely, Brigitte is the brainchild of Brigitte Mizrahi. She shared her passion for gourmet cheeses and a vision to transform a staid segment in the food industry into one of boldness, innovative flavor, and adventure. The products begin with premium rBST-free milk, sourced from small Wisconsin dairy farms using vegetarian rennet and only fresh ingredients. We pride ourselves on bringing you the freshest and most distinctive flavor. Sincerely, Brigitte continues her legacy with new flavor combinations that bring together sweet, spicy, and savory elements for the most exciting cheeses. All cheeses are certified Kosher by the OK and Halal by ETIMAD supervision. www.aifoods.com



Antoni Ravioli & Pasta Co. Inc.

Massapequa, New York

For 75 years, Antoni Ravioli & Pasta Co. Inc. has produced the highest quality ravioli, pasta, and noodles. The company produces for Private Label, food service, and retail sectors.

While all companies say they have the best products, Antoni Ravioli & Past rests on their 75-year reputation to speak for itself. For product information, contact Gene Saucci U.S. phone 1-516-799-0355 or 1-516-263-5544 or email at saucci@optonline.net.



Columbus Vegetable Oils

Des Plaines, Illinois

Columbus Vegetable Oils is a supplier of nearly 300 edible oils, shortenings, sauces, dressings and dips. As a fourth generation, certified woman owned business, Columbus provides superior customer service, fast processing and competitive pricing. With two distribution facilities in Des Plaines, II. and Reno, NV., both hold the prominent SQF certification in food safety and quality — a testament to the commitment to source the highest-quality materials and conduct rigorous in-house laboratory testing. Brands include Butcher Boy, Mike's Brand, Sunrise Shortening, Nature's Secret, Sorrento's Olive Oil and Soaper's Choice, in addition to servicing private label. For nearly 90 years, Columbus has been your trusted partner. Learn more at www.cvoils.com.

For more information about these or other Featured Products please email: FoodLink@foodexport.org.

featured DUCTS







Culver Duck Farms Inc.

Middlebury, Indiana

Culver Duck Farms, a prominent name in the duck industry, has a rich history and a strong commitment to quality, animal welfare, and sustainability. Established with the ambition to lead in the duck farming sector, Culver Duck has grown significantly over the years. Starting from a major milestone in 1959, when Herb Culver Jr. and Howard Phillips built the world's largest duck hatchery, producing 3,000,000 ducklings annually, the company has achieved numerous accomplishments.

Culver Duck prides itself on being the only duck farm in North America to earn the American Humane Certification, underscoring its dedication to animal welfare. The company's White Pekin ducks are raised in spacious barns, allowing them to roam freely and live in conditions that ensure their well-being. This approach not only contributes to the high quality and lean composition of Culver ducks but also aligns with the company's core values of trust, teamwork, integrity, commitment, and respect.



DnD Mediterranean Foods LLC

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

We are a US-based company that exports Californian raw nuts to Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East. Our four-generation expertise in pistachios, almonds, and walnuts makes us a leader in the industry.

Apart from Nuts and Dry fruits we also have sesame seed paste production in Oklahoma City "Made in the USA." We are the main suppliers to the major hummus brands worldwide and national retail brands.

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Endless West

Detroit, Michigan

Unlock your global potential with Endless West, your partner in export-ready bulk spirits, concentrates, and packaged brands. We specialize in delivering tailored solutions for your business, whether you're looking to expand your portfolio or launch a new venture. With Endless West, you'll enjoy unmatched flexibility—our products come in bulk IBC totes or ISO's or you can select from our wide variety of packaged spirits and ready-to-drink cocktails, ready to ship anywhere in the world. Whether you need to match a benchmark formulation or create a unique flavor profile, we've got you covered.

Reduce production costs, simplify your supply chain, and tap into limitless possibilities with Endless West.



Fancypants Baking Company

Walpole, Massachusetts

Fancypants is proudly a women-owned brand crafting indulgent-tasting, delicious crispy cookies with an elevated twist using real premium ingredients. Founded by Maura Duggan in 2004, Fancypants started as a decorative cookie company and has evolved into a decadent crispy cookie brand. Inspired by the homemade cookies Maura made with her grandmother after school, Fancypants flavors are classic, approachable and innovative with a special fancy twist. As one of the first upcycled cookies, Fancypants is committed to sustainability as they bake with upcycled oat flour and are proudly a zero-food waste brand.

featured DUCTS







Fry Krisp Food Products Inc.

Jackson, Michigan

Fry Krisp, renowned for its premium batter, breading and seasonings, is excited to announce the launch of its new retail line available in convenient pouches. This innovative packaging is designed to bring the same high-quality, crispy coating that chefs and food enthusiasts love directly to home kitchens. The pouches offer a practical, resealable solution, ensuring freshness and ease of use with every meal. Perfect for those who enjoy preparing restaurant-quality fried foods at home, Fry Krisp's new packaging format makes it simpler to achieve a perfectly crispy finish without the mess and fuss. Whether you're cooking up chicken, fish, or vegetables, these pouches are tailored to enhance flavor and texture with minimal effort. Fry Krisp continues to set the standard for excellence in the kitchen, now with even greater accessibility for everyday cooks.



Fusion Gourmet Foods, LLC

Wixom, Michigan

Introducing ON~A DATE, a delectable gourmet snack that will elevate your snacking experience to new heights. Indulge in the harmonious blend of smooth, creamy tahini or peanut butter, fine milk, or intense dark chocolate with these high-quality USA-grown organic Medjool dates and experience the perfect balance of sweet and savory flavors dancing on your taste buds.

The ON~A DATE Tahini & Coffee has recently won the prestigious 2024 SOFI Gold Award in the category of Nuts, Seeds, Trail Mix, and Dried Fruit.

As a specialty food manufacturer, Fusion Epicure set out to create delicious and healthy snacks that eliminate processed foods and focus on wholesome ingredients.



Heliponix, LLC

Evansville, Indiana

Anu™ is a health and wellness brand focused on simplifying fresh produce cultivation. Our Rotary Aeroponics® technology supports a 'Nespresso for plants' model, offering a seed pod subscription service that helps users grow Pure Produce®—produce that sets new standards for nutrition, flavor, and food safety while reducing waste. Founded by former NASA engineers from Purdue University, Anu is advancing sustainable indoor farming in homes and commercial spaces. Supported by NSF and USDA grants, Anu uses Al-driven LED algorithms to ensure effortless daily harvesting, promoting local, pesticide-free, and nutritious food production with minimal environmental impact.



Show-Me BBQ Sauce, LLC

Rocheport, Missouri

For nearly five decades, Show-Me® Bar-B-Q Sauce has shown that a few simple ingredients deliver everything but a simple taste. Rooted in the heart of Missouri, our three sauces and five seasonings are a Midwest staple but reach across kitchens in 50 states, 11 countries, and numerous military bases. Our shelf-stable, no-refrigeration formula lets everyone, from backyard grillers to BBQ pitmasters everywhere, enjoy our flavorful and classic taste. 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. Tradition raised us, while culinary exploration moves us. We craft it, but food lovers create unforgettable moments.

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

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Robin's Snack Group dba Grandpapa's Snack Company

Hamtramck, Michigan

Grandpapa's Snack Company is a women-owned, natural ingredient snack manufacturer. Our products are made with no artificial dyes and no artificial flavors. Grandpapa's makes a wide variety of extruded snacks in various shapes, sizes, and flavors. We pride ourselves on our taste and the quality of our products. Grandpapa's holds its quality to the highest standards. We use real cheese and only bake our snacks, a healthier route than traditional frying. This gives our products a unique flavor and quality that separates us from the competition. Already exporting to Oceania and Middle Eastern markets and launching in a major U.S. chain this October!

Grandpapa's is proud to deliver quality snacks to consumers. We use real cheese and only bake our snacks, a healthier route than traditional frying. This gives our products a unique flavor and quality that separates us from the competition.



Smoke'n Magic

Grain Valley, Missouri

Smoke'n Magic brings people together with bold, flavorful seasonings and sauces crafted from countless hours of cooking with family and friends. Designed to enhance the natural taste of each meat, these blends add rich, umami flavors to brisket, a sweet and spicy kick to chicken, and a beautiful, sweet finish to pork. Whether you're grilling, smoking, or cooking on any type of cooker, Smoke'n Magic products create a dynamic, flavorful experience. Not only will your meat taste incredible, but it will also look amazing. We're here to make your cooking experience truly magical—let the magic begin!



Upton's Naturals

Chicago, Illinois

Founded in 2006, Upton's Naturals is the #1 selling Seitan brand in the United States. Our products are proudly manufactured in Chicago, IL, using simple ingredients with no added flavors, colors, or preservatives. We offer a wide variety of products for export, including Seitan, Jackfruit, Banana Blossom, and vegan canned soups. Upton's Naturals makes it simple to prepare delicious, healthy plant-based meals at home whether you're a vegan, vegetarian, or just someone simply looking to eat less meat. Visit us at uptonsnaturals.com/wholesale to learn more.



Van Holten's Pickle-In-A-Pouch

Waterloo, Wisconsin

We're Van Holten's, the makers of the original Pickle-In-A-Pouch! With a variety of flavors, everyone from the local kiddos to your grandparents are bound to find a DILL-ICIOUS treat.

Our Charismatic Characters are perfect for any grab-and-go adventure. Each pickle comes individually packed with the contents of one Pickle and added brine for a juicy snack. Van Holten's pickles are gluten—and fat-free, low-calorie, keto-friendly, and a better-for-you snack option. Pickle-In-A-Pouch comes in a 12-ct. case with a 2-year Shelf Life. This product requires NO refrigeration.

For more information about these or other Featured Products please email: FoodLink@foodexport.org.