

US pork exports on record pace through June

US pork and beef exports remained strong in June, pushing export value for both products to a record first-half pace according to statistics released by USDA and compiled by the US Meat Export Federation (USMEF).



June pork exports totaled 181,531 metric tons (mt), up 7% from a year ago, while export value increased 25% to \$585.1 million. In the first half of 2014, pork export volume (1.15 million mt, +9%) and value (\$3.4 billion, +17%) achieved record highs.

Beef exports were up 5% in volume (106,609 mt) in June and set a new monthly value record of \$631.7 million (+12%). First-half export value also set a new record of \$3.27 billion (+16%). Export volume was 585,953 mt in the first half, up 8% from a year ago but trailing the 2011 record.

Pork export value per head slaughtered was a record-high \$72.24 in June, up \$15 from a year ago. The percentage of US production exported was 25% for muscle cuts and 29% when including both muscle cuts and variety meat – up from 24% and 28%, respectively, in June 2013.

With European pork absent from the Russian market for the past six months due to an impasse over African swine fever, competition has intensified in key Asian markets. But US pork still achieved first-half increases in South Korea and Japan.

"USMEF has focused for many years on establishing loyal customers in these markets and impressing upon them the quality and consistency of US pork," said USMEF president and CEO Philip Seng. "That loyalty is being tested in this increasingly competitive environment, but our results have held up very well."

First-half highlights for US pork included:

- Exports to Korea continued well ahead of last year's pace, as high domestic pork prices helped fuel imports. First-half volume was up 31% to 77,209 mt, while value increased 48% to \$236.3 million.
- Pork muscle cut exports to Japan were up 3% in volume (213,653 mt), and 5% in value (\$969.3 million).

- Exports to Mexico posted a very strong first half, increasing 15% in volume (333,072 mt) and 42% in value (\$751.6 million).
- Colombia has emerged as the pacesetter for US pork in the Central/South America region, with exports increasing 83% in volume (25,779 mt) and nearly doubling in value (\$69.7 million, +95%). Exports to the entire region increased 12% in volume (59,619 mt) and 21% in value (\$160.8 million).
- After a down year in 2013, exports to Australia rebounded nicely – increasing 17% in volume (33,149 mt) and 25% in value (\$114.3 million).

US pork regained limited access to the Russian market in March after a 13-month absence, with two slaughter plants resuming shipments to Russia. Exports were large in June (9,371 mt valued at \$34.3 million), but have now been suspended (effective Aug. 7) due to retaliatory sanctions announced by the Russian government.

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