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1989–90 Vegetable Production in Mexico for Export to the United States

J.F. Gomez

The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) between the United States, Canada, and Mexico will open opportunities for a new economic relationship with our international trading partner to the south. Understanding Mexico's vegetable exports is important for estimating the economic impact of NAFTA on the U.S. vegetable industry. For example, growers are concerned that the agreement will lead to major production shifts into Mexico, particularly in vegetables and other crops. On the other hand, U.S. fruit growers in the Northwest believe Mexico can become a major market for U.S.-grown apples, pears, and other deciduous fruit (Waterfield, 1991). Waterfield (1992) reported that, in 1992, for the first time, fruits, vegetables, and horticultural items ranked as the number one U.S. food export. The increase was in part due to escalating sales to Mexico, where overall trade is up 13.6% from 1989 (Blum, 1991). It is difficult to get reliable data on Mexican vegetable production and movement, which could answer the concerns of growers/shippers with respect to NAFTA. I present here an overview and perspective of vegetable production in Mexico.

In the 1989–90 season, Mexico farmed ≈20 million ha, of which 3.5%, or 700,000 ha, were dedicated to vegetables, including 246,000 ha for export (CNP, 1990). National vegetable production was 8 million t, of which only 1.5 million t was exported to the United States. Potentially, 100 different vegetables, some of which are major crops in the United States, can be produced in Mexico for export to the United States (Table 1).

In the past 10 years, imports of labor-intensive crops have risen; for example, muskmelon production has expanded 76%, while onion production has increased 128%. This rise is primarily due to higher consumer demand for these products. Consequently, some U.S. growers produce vegetables in Mexico to provide product throughout the year. However, some vegetable production has shifted from the United States into Mexico for various other reasons.

Growers may be attempting to lower produc-

tion costs in those vegetables that are labor-intensive. However, data show that this may not be the case. For example, to produce 1 kg of muskmelon in Guaymas, Sonora, costs \$0.31, while the cost is \$0.53 in Est. Gonzalez, Tamaulipas; in the Imperial Valley of California, the cost is about \$0.30 (Gomez et al., 1992). Other reasons include growers' searching for new production land that has available water for irrigation or perhaps fewer disease problems.

Roughly 72% of the vegetables produced in Mexico for export to the United States were grown in three states: Sinaloa, Sonora, and Baja California (Table 2). This is because Sinaloa and Sonora have the largest area of arable land for agricultural production in Mexico, and their proximity to California results in lower transportation costs. However, with NAFTA, there is more opportunity for expansion of vegetable production in the other Mexican states, particularly Michoacan, Jalisco, and Colima, because of their availability of land

Table 1. *Vegetables produced in Mexico and exported to the United States, 1989–90 season (CNP, 1990).*

Crop	Quantity (1000 t)
Tomato	338
Cucumber	192
Muskmelon	172
Onion	132
Pepper	117
Watermelon	109
Squash	99
Grape	38
Mango	35
Cabbage	21
Okra	18
Broccoli	17
Eggplant	14
Sweet corn	12
Cowpea	11
Others	104

Table 2. *Mexican state vegetable exports to the United States, 1989–90 season (CNP, 1990).*

State	Quantity (1000 t)
Sinaloa	674
Sonora	201
Baja California	162
Tamaulipas	98
Michoacan	76
Jalisco	47
Guerrero	30
Colima	27
Nayarit	21
Guanajuato	20
Veracruz	17
Others	66

Asgrow Seed Company, 1935 E. Parrish Court, Visalia, CA 93292.

Table 3. *Monthly export of Mexican vegetables to the United States, 1989–90 season (CNPH, 1990).*

Month	Quantity (1000 t)
October	29
November	69
December	144
January	237
February	238
March	270
April	178
May	134
June	69
July	41
August	18
September	12

and labor. Yet, added agricultural infrastructure is required, and improved roads and communication networks are needed to expand vegetable production in most of the central Mexican states.

Although the majority (83%) of Mexican vegetable exports to the United States occurred during the winter and spring months, there were vegetables introduced throughout the year (Table 3). Even with NAFTA, most of the vegetables crossing from Mexico into the United States will

Table 4. *Vegetable amounts exported to the United States at different Mexican ports of entry, 1989–90 season (CNPH, 1990).*

Port	Quantity (1000 t)
Nogales, Son.	870
Reynosa, Tamps.	218
Tijuana, B.C.	88
San Luis R.C., Son.	81
Mexicali, B.C.	71
Progreso, Tamps.	45
Cd. Juarez, Chih.	15
Others	51

continue to enter during the winter, when vegetable production is low in the United States due to unfavorable growing conditions. However, areas with vegetable harvest from December to May, such as Florida, and southern Texas, can expect more competition from Mexican vegetable imports than other parts of the United States.

Based on importation figures at seven main points of entry, Nogales was the leading point of entry—primarily because of vegetables introduced into the United States from Sinaloa and Sonora (Table 4). All ports of entry most likely will experience increased activity with NAFTA. Present points of entry will be insufficient to handle an increase in vegetable exports into the United States. Therefore, additional ports with agricultural inspection facilities will be needed.

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Export Marketing of Fresh Fruits in New Zealand

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Summary. The development of New Zealand's economy was based largely on exports to England. With the formation of the EEC, New Zealand was forced to find other markets and concentrate on a wider variety of export commodities. Marketing boards for specific products with monopoly power have been at the center of agricultural and horticultural exports in New Zealand. New Zealand has concentrated on developing new varieties, premium quality, research on postharvest handling, branding, and other marketing procedures to compete in the world market and give producers a good return.

New Zealand lies in the temperate waters of the South Pacific, 1200 miles east of Australia. Called the antipodean paradise by the early English settlers, it spans a distance equal to that from San Francisco to Seattle with a climate similar to that particular coastal region of the United States. The land mass is nearly 108,000 square miles, equivalent to the state of Colorado, and the population is just >3 million. New Zealand is a young country with an indigenous population closely related to native Hawaiians, where few European pioneer families can be traced back more than five generations. New Zealand is known in the United States primarily for the efforts of her yachtsman trying to win the America's Cup in San Diego, as well as some export products such as 'Gala' apples and kiwifruit. Turners and Growers is the leading fruit and produce wholesaler in New Zealand, heavily involved in both exports and imports.

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