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Washington State: Serving the World's Food Markets

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Washington State: Serving the World's Food Markets

Crisp apples, creamy dairy products, fine wine, fresh seafood, succulent beef, and mouth-watering vegetables. Washington food products are known worldwide for their quality, variety, and year-round availability. Combined with state of the art food processing, world-class transportation and port facilities, and a cutting-edge research and technology sector, Washington state is an agricultural powerhouse.

Agriculture has played a critical role in Washington's economy since the first pioneers settled over 200 years ago. Today, the agri-food complex employs 173,000 people-more than any other sector in the state.

Agriculture accounts for a fifth of the state's annual gross product. In 2000, farmers earned \$5.4 billion, ranking Washington's farms among the top twelve in the nation. The industry has increased efficiency and productivity as a result of heightened competition and growing consolidation. Washington growers use the latest technology to preserve soil and water. The industry employs sophisticated monitoring equipment to ensure food security from field to plate.

Seattle is the processing and distribution center for the vast fisheries of the North Pacific Ocean. It is homeport for the largest fishing companies in the nation, and the US headquarters for many foreign-flag fleets. Catches of salmon, crab, pollock, cod, sablefish, halibut and shrimp supply half of the nation's seafood and are an important export. Aquaculture plays a major role in both domestic and export markets with growing production of farmed salmon, oysters, clams, and other species.

Washington's Food Processing Industry

Washington state's food processing sector is the second largest manufacturing industry, employing over 40,000 workers. Food processing accounts for more than 11 percent of the total value of manufacturing production in Washington state, with over \$8 billion in annual revenues. We are national leaders in fruit products, including fruit juices and concentrates, frozen vegetables, potato products and seafood products. World-class wines, craft beers and gourmet coffee, as well as a variety of high-quality specialty foods, are among the many Washington state goods available.

Historically, Washington's reliable supply of inexpensive electricity generated by dams on the Snake and Columbia Rivers have contributed to the processed food sector's steady growth, especially in the frozen food industry.

Fruit and vegetable processing account for over a third of both the dollar value added and total employment in this sector. Washington state regularly leads the United States in the percentage of fruit and vegetable crops processed into value-added foodstuffs such as frozen vegetables, purees and concentrates.

Washington ranks fifth in wheat production in the nation. Average yields here are 61 bushels per acre, significantly higher than the national average. Approximately 90 percent of Washington's soft white wheat crop is exported to the Pacific Rim, the Indian subcontinent and the Middle East where it is used in traditional breads. Washington's large food processing industry is due to innovative companies such as Pasta USA, the

only manufacturer of instant pasta in the U.S., as well as established industry leaders such as Continental Mills, a manufacturer of bakery mixes, and Lamb-Weston, one of the largest U.S. potato processors.

Washington ranks first in the nation for milk production per cow-23,000 pounds in 2000, well above the national average. Value-added dairy products, such as butter, cheese, powdered milk and ice cream, are made from 80% of the total milk production. Our state is home to WestFarm Foods, owned by the nation's fourth-largest dairy cooperative and owner of the Darigold brand.

Located at approximately the same latitude as the great wine regions of France, with long warm days and cool crisp nights, Washington is noted for its premium wines. With over 29,000 acres of viniferous grapes in production, Washington state's output of premium and ultra-premium wines serves a discerning-and the fastest growing-segment in the market. Wine exports have increased dramatically in the last two decades and now challenge European wines in their own markets.

Washington's micro-brew beer production is another growing segment of the beverage industry. It's not surprising when hops, one of four key ingredients to premium beers, are a top crop in Washington. In fact, our state ranks first in the world in hop production.

Washington's standing as the nation's top apple, pear, sweet cherry, and Concord grape producer make a world-class juice industry a natural. Tree Top, Inc., the world's largest apple processor, is headquartered in Washington. It is a grower-owned cooperative made up of 2,000 orchard-owners from the Pacific Northwest.

Washington is also a leading producer of organic foods. At the request of the organic industry, Washington was the first state to establish standards for organic products and has been a leader in developing the National Organic Standards. With increased concerns about food and environmental protection, there is a growing demand for organic products in both the U.S. and abroad. Cascadian Farms, which started in Concrete, Washington, has evolved to be the largest processor of organic foods in the U.S.

A growing number of Washington companies provide gourmet and ethnic foods to worldwide markets. These products, ranging from all-natural pastas to soft salmon jerky to loganberry liqueur-filled chocolates, use high quality or natural ingredients readily available from Washington growers. The state's food processors, responding to consumer demands world wide, are tailoring products to fit specific markets. Washington cattle ranchers were among the first in the United States to raise top-grade Wagyu cattle (Kobe beef.)

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The Bounty of Washington State: Variety, Quality, Abundance

Located in the Northwest corner of the continental United States, Washington's rich, arable lands are nurtured by a mild climate and a unique growing season-warm days of more than 17 hours of sunlight followed by cool nights. The Cascade mountain range creates microclimates that support record crop diversity. Over 230 food, feed and seed crops are grown each year, more than any other state except California. A full third of the state is in pastureland or rangeland, supporting a cattle industry that began before statehood. The bounty from the waters bordering the state to the west supports a thriving seafood industry. This natural wealth, combined with the state's proximity to world markets, has made Washington one of the leading exporters of food and agricultural products.

Bringing Washington's Bounty to Export Markets

Washington's agricultural sector exports almost a third of its production and accounts for nearly one-eighth of Washington's total exports abroad. The state's growers and producers look to international markets for growth and expansion.

Public and private warehouse and cold storage facilities located throughout the state ensure quality and guarantee efficiency for producers and buyers. Washington's 140 million cubic feet of public refrigerated warehouse space ranks third in the nation. Bellingham Cold Storage is the state's largest private facility with nearly 1 million square feet of refrigeration and freezer space. Today, buyers can expect year-round freshness thanks to state-of-the-art refrigeration and controlled atmosphere (CA) warehouses. The ports of Seattle and Tacoma are the second-largest container hub in the United States in terms of volume. The Columbia and Snake River system, the second-largest inland waterway in the US, provides a water route for agricultural products in Eastern Washington to be shipped to worldwide markets through ports in Western Washington. Smaller ports in Eastern Washington assist the development of food processing and shipping facilities and businesses. One example is the Port of Pasco, which operates the 250-acre Pasco Processing Center, a hub for food processing, cold storage and distribution facilities. Washington timothy hay is compressed into pellets, cubes, and small bales here and exported to Asian markets for high-quality feed. Truck, rail and barge services converge here, serving the area's grain, produce, and value-added food producers.

Washington enjoys the distinct natural geographic advantage as the crossroad to the world. Western Washington ports are the closest continental US ports to Northern Asia. In addition, Seattle-Tacoma International Airport is equidistant to both Tokyo and London, boosting exports of perishable items.



In Support of Washington State Agriculture

Washington State University, at its main campus in Pullman and through its network of Research and Extension Centers and county Cooperative Extension offices, provides research and educational programs in support of the state's food and agricultural system. The University partners with the agricultural commodity commissions, the private sector and government agencies to develop new agricultural technologies, management techniques and implementations. The University's International Marketing for Agricultural Commodities and Trade (IMPACT) Center is an important source of information and research on foreign market opportunities, product development and solving the problems that impede export of Washington's agricultural products.

Public and private companies serve the agri-food industry in ways that keep Washington's food processing industry on the cutting edge. One example is Walla Walla-based Key Technology, which has changed the way food is inspected, sorted, handled, and prepared for processing. The firm manufactures automated defect removal systems, which revolutionized the French fry industry, and high-volume sorters that separate by color, shape, and size automatically.

The Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) fosters the state's food and agricultural industry and helps export-ready companies sell their products overseas. Headquartered in the state's capital of Olympia, WSDA has offices in Seattle, Yakima, Japan and Taiwan.

The University of Washington, located in Seattle, is a leading fisheries, aquaculture and seafood research center.

The USDA's Agriculture Research Service contributes greatly to the high quality of state's food products by undertaking research projects on food processing, storage, shipping and other related topics.

The state is also home to a number of partnerships that enhance the agricultural sector. The Agri Business Commercialization and Development Center applies high technology research from the US Department of Energy to companies that want practical solutions to develop new agricultural products.

The Northwest Food Processors Association, a trade group that represents food processing technology firms in Washington, Idaho and Oregon, sponsors an annual convention and exposition. This event is the nation's largest regional food processing trade show, featuring the latest innovations in equipment, services and products from firms of the Pacific Northwest.

Washington State Commodity Commissions

These Washington state-sanctioned, grower-funded associations provide marketing assistance to their members and help promote products in domestic and overseas markets

Washington Alfalfa Seed Commission	(509) 547-5563
Washington Apple Commission	(509) 663-9600
Washington Asparagus Commission	(509) 543-9757
Washington Barley Commission	(509) 456-4400
Washington Beef Commission	(206) 444-2902
Washington Blueberry Commission	(360) 766-6150
Washington Bulb Commission	(360) 422-5466
Washington Canola Commission	(509) 547-5538
Washington Cranberry Commission	(360) 267-2012
Washington Dairy Products Commission	(425) 672-0687
Washington Dry Pea & Lentil Commission	(208) 882-3023
Washington Fruit Commission	(509) 453-4837
Washington Fryer Commission	(425) 226-6125
Washington Hop Commission	(509) 453-4749
Washington Mint Commission	(509) 547-5563
Washington Potato Commission	(509) 765-8845
Washington Red Raspberry Commission	(360) 354-8767
Washington Seed Potato Commission	(360) 354-4670
Washington Strawberry Comm.	(360) 491-6567
Washington Tree Fruit Research	(509) 665-8271
Washington Turfgrass Seed Commission	(509) 547-5538
Washington Wheat Commission	(509) 456-2481
Washington Wine Commission	(206) 667-9463

Contacts

For additional information about the agricultural and food processing sectors in Washington state, please contact:

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Pullman, WA 99164-6214

<http://impact.wsu.edu/>

Tel: (509) 335-6653

Fax: (509) 335-9858

Email: impact@wsu.edu

Western United States Agricultural Trade Association

2500 Main St., Suite 110

Vancouver, WA 98660-2967

<http://www.wusata.org/>

Tel: (360) 693-3373

Fax: (360) 693-3464

Northwest Food Processors Association

6950 SW Hampton Street, Suite 340

Portland, OR 97223-8329

<https://www.nwfpamembers.org/eweb/StartPage.aspx>

Tel: (503) 639-7676

Fax: (503) 639-7007

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Seattle, WA 98101-2603

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