

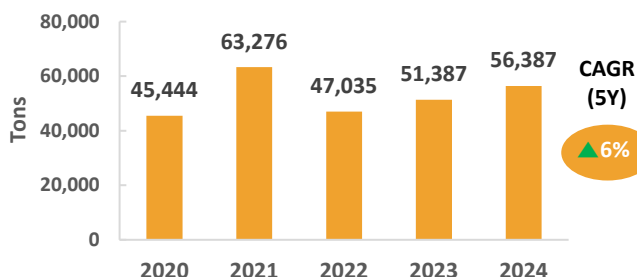
Korea Market Brief

Tree Nuts

Korean consumers place a high value on tree nuts for their health benefits. Notably, many of these nuts are not produced domestically and are sourced through imports.

Total Import Volume

(Unit: MT)



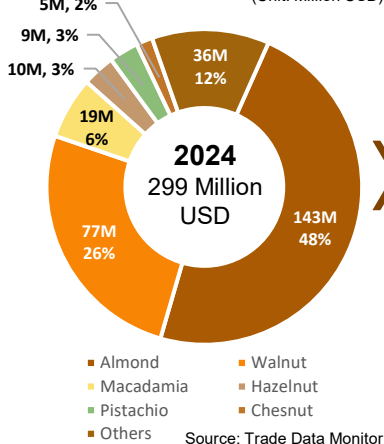
- Imported nuts, predominantly almond and walnut, comprise the majority of tree nut consumption in South Korea.
- Domestic tree nut production in South Korea is limited in both volume and variety, with chestnut, ginkgo nut, and pine nut being the primary local tree nut products.

Source: Trade Data Monitor

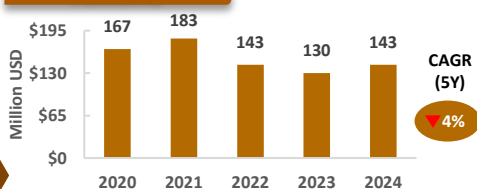
Almond and walnut remain South Korea's top imported tree nuts, with both experiencing a rebound in 2024. Though smaller in market size, macadamia and pistachio have shown steady growth.

Market Share by Type

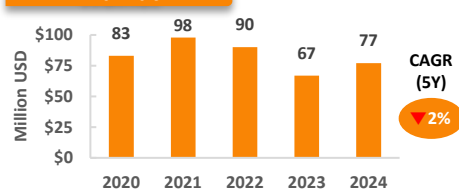
(Unit: Million USD)



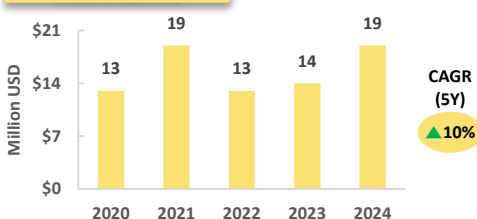
Almond



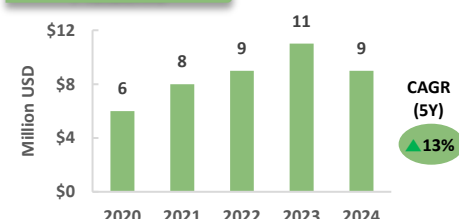
Walnut



Macadamia



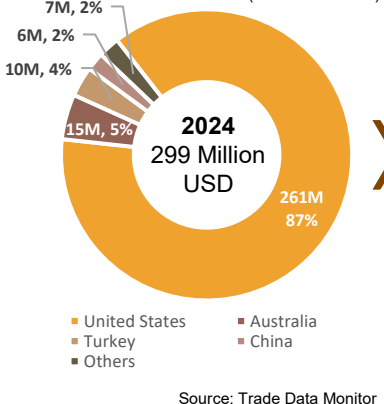
Pistachio



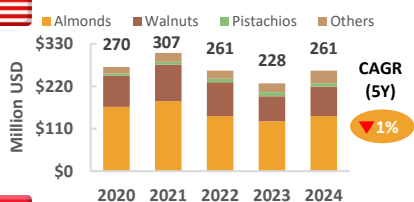
The United States is the leading supplier of imported nuts with a staggering 87 percent market share, followed by Australia.

Market Share by Country of Origin

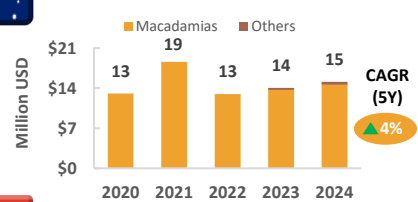
(Unit: Million USD)



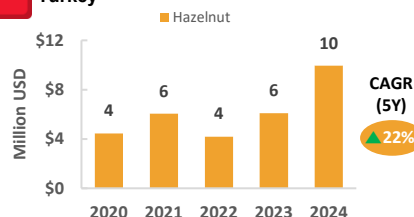
United States



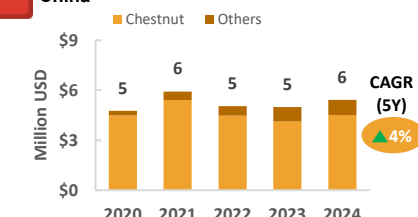
Australia



Turkey



China



Foreign Agricultural Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Agricultural Trade Office (ATO)



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Consumer Trends

Health-Conscious Snacking

South Korea's increasing focus on health-conscious eating has fueled the demand for nutritious snacks, with tree nuts becoming a preferred choice. According to the Korea Rural Economic Institute, this growth has been largely influenced by the rise of solo drinking and home drinking culture, alongside heightened concerns regarding health and weight management during the pandemic – sentiments that continue to shape consumer behavior in 2024. Despite their high-calorie content, nuts are recognized as beneficial for [weight management](#), particularly considering growing concerns over lifestyle-related diseases such as hypertension and type 2 diabetes.

Convenience-Driven Consumption and Flavor Innovation

Convenience continues to be a major driver of tree nut consumption in South Korea. [Single-serving packs and resealable pouches](#) are gaining popularity, catering to busy urban professionals and single-person households who prioritize easy-to-consume snacks. Convenience stores and e-commerce platforms are increasingly offering these on-the-go options, contributing to a growth in demand for energy bars, trail mixes, and even [subscription-based nut delivery services](#). Simultaneously, flavor innovation is expanding the market by enhancing the appeal of these convenient formats. Nuts with [unique flavors](#)—such as honey butter, garlic bread, and wasabi—are getting popular, not just among local consumers but also among international visitors. Combining diverse flavors with easy-to-carry packaging has made tree nuts a versatile snack for a wide range of consumers.

‘Ugly’ Produce Trend

The “ugly” produce trend in South Korea reflects a growing consumer interest in imperfect-looking yet high-quality and cost-effective agricultural products, traditionally associated with fruits and vegetables. Recently, this shift in perception started to make slight inroads into the [tree nut sector](#). For example, [darker walnuts](#)—once perceived as lower quality—are being marketed that the darker color is due to natural sunlight, emphasizing their rich flavor and health advantages. This trend appeals to today’s economy, where rising costs drive demand for quality yet budget-friendly options. While the response to such repositioning has been encouraging, it is important to view this as an emerging trend still in its formative stages. As with many consumer patterns in South Korea, its trajectory may evolve over time in response to shifting market dynamics and cultural attitudes.

Impact of Imports and Sustainability

According to the Korea Rural Economic Institute, South Korea's nut consumption volume maintains an annual level of approximately 100,000 tons. This sustained demand is met by increased imports offsetting declining domestic nut production. As domestic production continues to decrease, the market increasingly relies on imported nuts to meet consumer demand, reinforcing the role of imports in maintaining stable consumption levels. In response to growing consumer concerns about environmental impact, importers and brands are increasingly [emphasizing sustainable and ethically sourced products](#). This integration of sustainability messaging into imported nut offerings reflects a broader shift toward eco-friendly consumption, which is expected to continue gaining traction in the market.

Regulatory Overview

***Disclaimer: This overview is not a comprehensive guide, and regulations can frequently change. Exporters should verify requirements with their importers before goods are shipped.*



Tariffs & Taxes

Korea applies an import duties on U.S. tree nuts as shown below. Please refer to the [Agricultural Tariff Tracker](#) for details.

Tree Nuts	HS code	2024	2025	2026	2027
• Almond, Hazelnut (unshelled), Walnut (Shelled), Pistachio, Others (Pecan)	080211, 080212, 080221,080232 080250, 0802909000	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
• Hazelnut(shelled)	080222	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
• Walnut(unshelled)	080231	6.0%	3.0%	0.0%	0.0%

Source: <https://apps.fas.usda.gov/agtarifftracker/Home/Search>

A Pre-Registration and Required Certification for Import to Korea

Product Registration

No product registration is required to import U.S. tree nuts into Korea.

Facility Registration

Either a foreign facility or an importer shall apply for registration through the MFDS website.

Certificate of Origin

The certificate of origin must be prepared for origin verification. Documentation must be kept for five years.

Phytosanitary Certificate

Fresh vegetables, grains, fruits, and nuts require a phytosanitary certificate issued by USDA/APHIS.

For details, please refer to [FAIRS Country Report](#), [FAIRS Export Certificate Report](#)

B Labeling Requirements

All imported U.S. products are required to carry legible Korean language labels. Label stickers or tags may be placed upon arrival in Korea, labels should not be easily removable or cover the original label such as product name or expiration date.

Korean Language Labeling

- Agricultural products in a container or packages: the product name, the business name, the packing date or the production year, contents, storage condition or handling methods are required to be indicated on the package.

Consideration for Labeling

- Misleading claims such as Non-GMO for products that do not have GMO counterpart are not permitted.

C Import Inspection

Laboratory Test

All newly imported products undergo laboratory tests.

Field / Visual Inspection

Subsequent shipments of the same product that passed the first lab test are subject to inspection.

Random Sampling Test

Samples are selected randomly depending on violation history or market intelligence.

For details, please refer to [FAIRS Country Report](#), [FAIRS Export Certificate Report](#)

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Korean Food Safety & MRLs

For information on Korean MRLs, please refer to the following link.

[Pesticide MRLs](#)

Frequently Asked Questions

FAQ #1: Are products required to meet Korea's MRL standards?

Yes. Korea has a national MRL list that includes import tolerance MRLs. Prior to export, please check Korea's MRL list to make sure that products meet Korea's MRL standards. In the absence of an established MRL, Korea applies a 0.01ppm default tolerance.

FAQ #2: Are there any requirements on exporters when making a Certification of Origin?

Yes, if you are qualified for the FTA. Article 6.17.1 of KORUS FTA requires specific records to be kept for a minimum of five years if a certification from a producer or exporter forms the basis of a claim. We encourage you to look at these provisions. There are also obligations of exporters provided under Article 6.20. Questions about these provisions can be e-mailed to KORUS@ustr.eop.gov or at fta@dhs.gov.

FAQ #3: Are there any documents required for Halal, GMP, or vegan products?

Yes. In order to apply a mark or claim to packaging, exporters and importers should keep supporting documents for their marketing claims. MFDS does not check supporting documents when products arrive in Korea, but MFDS has a right to request supporting documents if necessary. Supporting documents should be issued by reliable and credible organizations.

FAQ #4: What are the roles and responsibilities of importers?

Korean importers are responsible for claiming preferential treatment for qualifying goods. However, the exporter or producer may be asked by the importer, customs broker, or the Korean Customs Service to provide a written or electronic certification or other information to support the importer's claim. The information required for certification can be found in Article 6.15.2 of the KORUS FTA, but additional elements may be required by the Korean Customs Service. You should contact your importer or customs broker to confirm what information is required.

USDA GAIN Report Link

[Facility Registration](#)
[MRL](#)
[Exporter Guide](#)

FAIRS Reports

[FAIRS Country Report](#)
[FAIRS Export Certificate Report](#)

ATO Seoul - Regulation

[ATO Seoul Regulations](#)

