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Report Name: Food Service - Hotel Restaurant Institutional Annual

Country: Dominican Republic

Post: Santo Domingo

Report Category: Food Service - Hotel Restaurant Institutional

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Report Highlights:

The Dominican Republic (DR) continues to be one of the most dynamic and rapidly growing economies in Latin America and the Caribbean. The Spanish-speaking Caribbean nation consistently ranks among the top three destinations for U.S. consumer-oriented products in the Western Hemisphere, and second in Latin America, behind Mexico. In 2024, U.S. exports of consumer-oriented products to the DR totaled \$1.2 billion, up nearly 10 percent relative to 2023 due to strong tourism, robust foreign direct investment, particularly in the hospitality industry, and expanding domestic consumption. As visitor arrivals are projected to reach a record 11.7 million by the close of calendar year 2025, tourism will remain a primary driver of HRI growth.

Market Fact Sheet: Dominican Republic

The Dominican Republic (DR) continues to be one of the most dynamic and rapidly growing economies in Latin America and the Caribbean. The Spanish-speaking Caribbean nation consistently ranks among the top three destinations for U.S. consumer-oriented products in the Western Hemisphere, and second in Latin America, behind Mexico. In 2024, U.S. exports of consumer-oriented products to the DR totaled \$1.2 billion, up nearly 10 percent relative to 2023 due to strong tourism, robust foreign direct investment, particularly in the hospitality industry, and expanding domestic consumption. As visitor arrivals are projected to reach a record 11.7 million by the close of calendar year 2025, tourism will remain a primary driver of HRI growth.

Consumer-Oriented Agricultural Imports

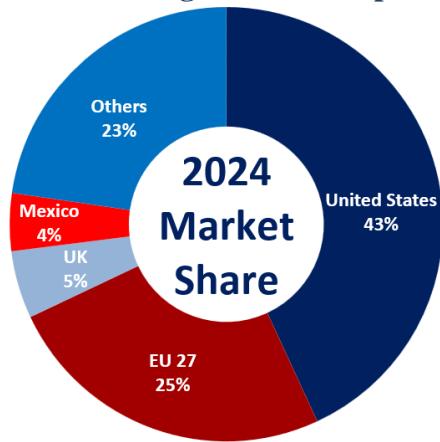


Chart 1: Top Exporting Countries to the Dominican Republic
Source: Trade Data Monitor (TDM).

Food Processing Industry

The Central Bank of the Dominican Republic (BCDR) valued the food processing industry for 2024 at \$3.97 billion under the category of "food industry," with an additional \$1.4 billion attributed to processed beverages and other products. Key sectors include meat, wheat milling, bakery, and dairy. The U.S. remains a major supplier of essential ingredients like meats, oils, and dairy.

Food Retail Industry

The Dominican modern retail sector features a variety of U.S. products and is rapidly growing, primarily through locally owned companies. Despite the rise in supermarkets, they only account for 20-25 percent of retail sales, with most transactions occurring in traditional channels like colmados (i.e. neighborhood mom-and-pop-style stores) and warehouses, which focus on locally produced goods.

Quick Facts Calendar Year 2024

Imports of Consumer-Oriented Products

World Total: \$2.9 million

List of Top 10 Growth Products in the DR

1) Dairy Products	6) Poultry Meat & Prods. (ex. eggs)
2) Pork & Pork Products	7) Processed Vegetables
3) Soup & Other Food Preparations	8) Beef & Beef Products
4) Distilled Spirits	9) Non-Alcoholic Bev. (ex. juices, coffee, tea)
5) Bakery Goods, Cereals, & Pasta	10) Wine & Related Products

Food Industry by Channels (U.S. billion)

Food Service-HRI	\$7.50
Food Processing	\$2.90
Food and Agriculture Exports	\$3.30

Top 10 DR Retailers*

1) Sirena	6) Jumbo
2) Bravo	7) Sirena Market
3) Hypermercados Olé	8) Plaza Lama
4) Nacional Supermarkets	9) PriceSmart
5) Aprezio	10) Carrefour City

GDP/Population

Population:	11.4 million
GDP:	US\$121 billion
GDP per capita:	US\$11,743
Median annual income:	US\$6,254

Sources: Table 1. Source: Global Agricultural Trade System (GATS), TDM; World Bank; IMF. *Ordered by quantity of establishments.

Strengths/Weaknesses/Opportunities/Threats

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of CAFTA-DR provides preferential tariff treatment for U.S. exports, over other foreign suppliers. Geographic proximity to the U.S. and heightened demand for high-quality food products. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Higher cost of some U.S. products compared to competitors. Agricultural exports may face non-tariff barriers such as regulatory hurdles, and delays in import permits. Import sensitivity of several products.
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Full implementation of CAFTA-DR. Expansion of the middle class which is seeking higher-value food options. U.S. exports, are well-positioned to meet the demand from this market segment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Competition from other CAFTA-DR countries and DR's other free trade agreement partners. Inflationary pressures, rising fuel prices, limited cold chain capacity, and supply chain disruptions could increase the cost of goods in the DR.

Figure 2. CAFTA-DR SWOT Analysis for U.S. exports.

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SECTION I: MARKET SUMMARY

The Dominican Republic continues to be a significant and stable economic player in Latin America and the Caribbean. In 2024, U.S. consumer-oriented exports to the Dominican Republic surpassed \$1.2 billion, solidifying its position as the third-largest market for these products and the fourth-largest for U.S. agricultural and related products in the Western Hemisphere. For more information about the market dynamics and import requirements, the 2025 [Exporter Guide](#) and the [Food and Agriculture Import Regulations and Standards](#) (FAIRS) narrative report provide comprehensive insights.

In the Dominican Republic (DR), the hotel, restaurant, and institutional (HRI) sector is one of the country's most important economic sectors, underpinning the broader tourism industry that contributes nearly 20 percent of gross domestic product (GDP).

The DR closed 2024 with a total of 11.2 million visitors. Public information from the Ministry of Tourism has stated that Dominican tourism continues to achieve extraordinary growth, with over five million visitors arriving during the January through May 2024 period, representing a 12-percent increase compared to 2023. Projected visitor arrivals to the DR in 2025 total approximately 11.7 million. U.S. citizens are the largest passport holders, accounting for roughly 50 percent of arrivals, followed by Canada at more than 15 percent. Other leading passport holders to the DR include Colombia and Argentina, each contributing roughly five percent of visitors.

The rise in economic growth, in part due to tourism, has spurred consumer spending, particularly in the food and beverage sector. Increased spending has sparked greater demand for premium products, such as beef and pork products, poultry, seafood, cheeses, frozen potatoes and vegetables and craft beer.

ADVANTAGES AND CHALLENGES

Advantages	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The implementation of CAFTA-DR, which has lowered or eliminated duties on almost all products.• A historically large tourist population, which demands high value food products.• An increasingly modern HRI sector, which seeks new, high-quality products• A growing number of consumers demanding higher quality and healthier products• Proximity between the DR and United States, and strong commercial and cultural ties• Efficient food distribution channels	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Competition from other CAFTA-DR signees and the DR's other free trade agreement partners• Spanish language labeling requirements• Delays for import permits and sanitary registration, which can affect the availability of imported products• Cold chain limitations• 18 percent VAT and high logistical costs

SECTION II: ROAD MAP FOR MARKET ENTRY

Market Entry Strategy

To enter the Dominican market, the Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) Office of Agricultural Affairs in Santo Domingo recommends starting with a review of the Food and Agriculture Import Regulations and Standards (FAIRS) report for the latest import regulations and market information. FAS Santo Domingo can facilitate connections with relevant authorities and assist stakeholders in navigating regulatory requirements. For understanding the market dynamics and import requirements, the 2024 [Exporter Guide](#)¹ and the [FAIRS](#)² narrative reports provide comprehensive insights.

Marketing Channels

In the DR, most food service importers prefer to purchase directly from U.S. manufacturers. However, for smaller volumes, and to capitalize on logistical and transportation advantages, many importers purchase consolidated shipments from distribution centers in Miami or other east coast locations. For meat, buyers also frequently purchase combined product shipments, including mixing meat and seafood products in the same container. Also, local providers, working as distributors, are found in the meat and seafood supply chains. They usually focus on a smaller number of end users (hotels and restaurants) and buy from larger importers.

Typical Distribution Channel:



Fruit, especially apples and pears, has a simpler distribution channel, with a few major importers directly supplying outlets.

Fruit Distribution Channel:



The attendance at U.S. trade shows has been increasing in recent years. HRI establishments' representatives, i.e., chefs, restauranteurs, hotel managers, and purchase or commercial representatives

¹https://apps.fas.usda.gov/newgainapi/api/Report/DownloadReportByFileName?fileName=Exporter%20Guide%20Annual_Santo%20Domingo_Dominican%20Republic_DR2024-0009

²https://apps.fas.usda.gov/newgainapi/api/Report/DownloadReportByFileName?fileName=FAIRS%20Country%20Report%20Annual_Santo%20Domingo_Dominican%20Republic_DR2024-0006

attending trade shows purchase directly from a U.S. manufacturer or distributor. However, their attendance is not making a big impact on how hotels and restaurants are getting their products.



Some of the best opportunities for U.S. products are with the large hotels (including U.S. franchises, such as Hyatt, Hard Rock Café, JW Marriott, Hilton, or Holiday Inn) and the all-inclusive resorts in eastern DR. However, these resorts are moderate to high-priced. Similarly, hundreds of restaurants include U.S. imported products on their menus, creating additional opportunities for U.S. agricultural products. Post has put together a list of these potential clients that can be provided upon request.

Local products predominantly supply the institutional portion of the HRI sector. Nevertheless, catering is a growing niche that is creating additional opportunities for U.S. products. In addition, U.S. products are increasingly being purchased to supply school feeding programs.

Market Composition

The Dominican Republic is the regional leader in short-term rental properties, with a total of more than 121,000 rooms across 49,000 properties in 2024, and an average occupancy rate of 71.5 percent. In 2024 alone, over 1,000 additional rooms were added. By 2026, capacity is expected to increase by more than 12,000 rooms, primarily driven by ongoing hotel projects in Pedernales, Miches, and Punta Cana.

There are more than 22 fast food restaurant chains registered in the DR, with an estimated 129 outlets. Most of them are U.S. franchises. There are also over 333 medium and large restaurants in the country, with 167 of them located in Santo Domingo (of which approximately 50 are considered high-end restaurants), 61 in Santiago, 60 in Bávaro, 23 in La Romana, and 22 in Puerto Plata. The most important U.S. products for these outlets include meat cuts, seafood, cheese, fruits, and frozen potatoes. In addition, some of the key retail establishments distribute wines, craft beer, and other products to these restaurants.

SECTION III: COMPETITION AND MARKET SHARE

Overall, the United States remains the leading supplier of consumer-oriented products to the Dominican Republic, holding 43 percent market share in 2024. The European Union (EU27) is the largest competitor, with an approximate 25 percent market share in this category. Major product categories are described further below:

Pork & Pork Products: U.S. exports of pork and pork products to the Dominican Republic totaled \$277 million, with U.S. pork capturing approximately 85 percent of the Dominican import market. Pork is the top U.S. consumer-oriented export to the Dominican Republic and the second-largest overall consumer-oriented import to the country.

Beef & Beef Products: the U.S. secured approximately 96 percent market share by sales, valued at \$125 million, thanks to its geographic proximity, high-quality cuts, and the popularity of Certified Angus Beef (CAB) in both food service and retail.

Dairy Products: Domestically produced cheese lacks competitiveness compared to imported varieties in terms of product variety, quality, and sanitary standards. As a result, U.S. dairy products captured a 25 percent market share in 2024. However, the United States continues to trail the European Union, which accounted for 58 percent of the market during the same period.

Wine and Beer: The DR wine market offers strong potential for the U.S. wine industry. In 2024, the United States exported \$26.8 million in wine to the Dominican Republic, accounting for 38 percent of total wine imports. The European Union remains the dominant competitor with a combined 65 percent market share. Spain leads EU suppliers, holding 38 percent of total wine imports, followed by France with 14 percent. Demand for U.S. craft beer also remains strong. U.S. beer exports reached \$11 million in 2024, representing 9 percent of total beer imports. In addition, the Dominican Republic's local craft beer industry relies on U.S. grains and hops as key production inputs.

Potatoes and Fresh Vegetables: The United States remains the leading supplier of fresh or chilled potatoes to the Dominican Republic. U.S. exports in 2024 totaled \$14 million, accounting for 59 percent of total imports, reflecting strong U.S. competitiveness despite increased EU presence. In 2024, the European Union supplied roughly 25 percent of the Dominican Republic's fresh or chilled potato imports, led primarily by the Netherlands (\$5million). While EU shipments remain significant, the United States continues to dominate the market with a nearly 60 percent share, supported by proximity, supply reliability, and established trade relationships.

In 2024, the market share of U.S. fresh vegetable exports to the Dominican Republic increased by 60 percent, reaching a total export value of \$18 million and capturing 20 percent of the overall import market. China remained the United States' top competitor, holding 23 percent of the market in 2024 following a 27-percent increase in exports. China's leading products in this category were garlic and onions.

Fruits: In 2024, U.S. apples dominated the Dominican Republic market with a 96 percent share, reflecting a 7- percent increase compared to 2023 and reinforcing a strong presence in the local market. U.S. pears captured a 59 percent market share, while U.S. grape exports reached a 31 percent share,

representing a 50 percent year-over-year increase. U.S. mandarin and orange exports to the Dominican Republic totaled \$4 million each, increasing by 150 percent and 42 percent, respectively. Chilean grapes valued at \$8 million and Peruvian grapes valued at \$12 million remain the primary competitors in this category and are widely available in local grocery stores. Overall, U.S. fresh fruit exports to the Dominican Republic totaled \$55 million in 2024, marking a 19-percent increase compared to the same period in 2023 and accounting for 57 percent of the country's total fresh fruit imports.

SECTION IV: BEST PRODUCTS PROSPECTS CATEGORIES

Products Present in the Market Which Have Good Sales Potential

Leading U.S. products in the Dominican Republic's food service sector include premium red meat cuts, pork, poultry, seafood, cheeses, frozen potatoes and vegetables, fresh fruit, wine, and craft beer. U.S. beef, particularly specialty cuts, is popular in high-end restaurants, especially in Santo Domingo. While the DR has strong domestic poultry and moderate pork supplies, growing demand for specific cuts is met through imports. The food service sector is also heavily reliant on imported seafood, creating opportunities for U.S. lobster, salmon, shrimp, and crabmeat. Cheeses like cheddar, mozzarella, and provolone are widely used, and frozen potato products remain popular. U.S. fruits, including pears, grapes, and apples, are available year-round, with increasing interest in nectarines, peaches, and apricots. U.S. wines, mainly from California, remain a top choice, despite competition from the EU. Meanwhile, U.S. craft beer is gaining popularity, especially among younger consumers. U.S. turkey sees high demand during peak holiday periods and is increasingly popular year-round for brunch sandwiches.

Products Not Present in Significant Quantities but have Good Sales Potential

Some poultry and egg products might find a good opportunity in the Dominican market. For instance, duck can be found on occasion as a specialty dish in some upscale restaurants, hotels, and resorts throughout the year. Meanwhile, growing procurement efforts for liquid and powdered eggs are among the top ingredients sought by local bakeries.

Top Consumer-Oriented Agricultural Products Imported from the World

January - December DR imports from the world (in millions of dollars)			
Product	2022	2023	2024
Consumer Oriented Agricultural Total	2,600	2,656	2,923
Dairy Products	530	533	544
Pork & Pork Products	252	293	322
Soup & Other Food Preparations	208	216	224
Distilled Spirits	230	196	202
Bakery Goods, Cereals, & Pasta	163	171	194
Poultry Meat & Prods. (ex. eggs)	155	130	152
Processed Vegetables	106	116	131
Beef & Beef Products	103	112	130
Mfg. Tobacco	99	113	122
Non-Alcoholic Bev. (ex. juices, coffee, tea)	112	110	121
Wine & Related Products	88	80	96
Fresh Fruit	65	81	92
Processed Fruit	67	66	80
Fruit & Vegetable Juices	61	54	78
Fresh Vegetables	46	52	76
Chewing Gum & Candy	54	64	63
Condiments & Sauces	47	55	62
Chocolate & Cocoa Products	40	41	52
Beer	50	48	48
Meat Products NESOI	23	27	30
<i>Others</i>	101	96	104

Data Source: Trade Data Monitor (TDM)

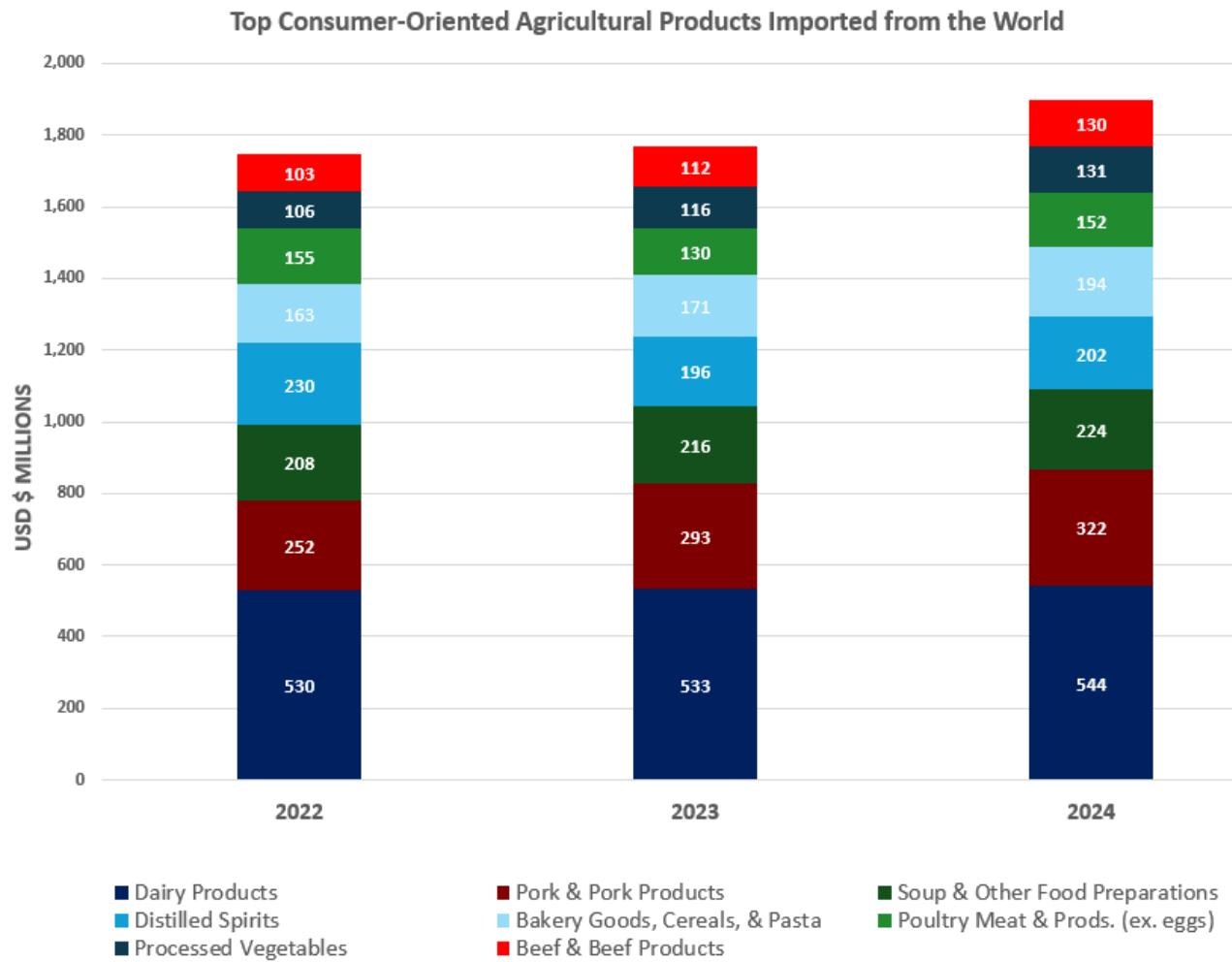


Chart 2. Data Source: Trade Data Monitor (TDM)

Top Consumer-Oriented Products Imported from the United States

January - December U.S. Exports to the DR (in millions of dollars)			
Product	2022	2023	2024
Consumer Oriented Agricultural Total	1,072	1,104	1,207
Pork & Pork Products	234	276	276
Dairy Products	158	132	134
Poultry Meat & Prods. (ex. eggs)	78	93	124
Beef & Beef Products	97	107	119
Mfg. Tobacco	87	91	104
Soup & Other Food Preparations	47	47	57
Fresh Fruit	44	46	55
Bakery Goods, Cereals, & Pasta	42	46	51
Condiments & Sauces	31	35	40
Fruit & Vegetable Juices	49	27	34
Distilled Spirits	48	38	32
Wine & Related Products	21	23	27
Chocolate & Cocoa Products	17	19	21
Processed Vegetables	22	21	21
Meat Products NESOI	11	15	20
Fresh Vegetables	18	15	18
Non-Alcoholic Bev. (ex. juices, coffee, tea)	11	15	14
Processed Fruit	12	13	14
Tree Nuts	13	14	13
Beer	11	10	11
<i>Others</i>	21	21	22

Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau Trade Data

**GROWTH TRENDS FOR TOP 5 CONSUMER ORIENTED-PRODUCTS
IMPORTED FROM THE UNITED STATES**

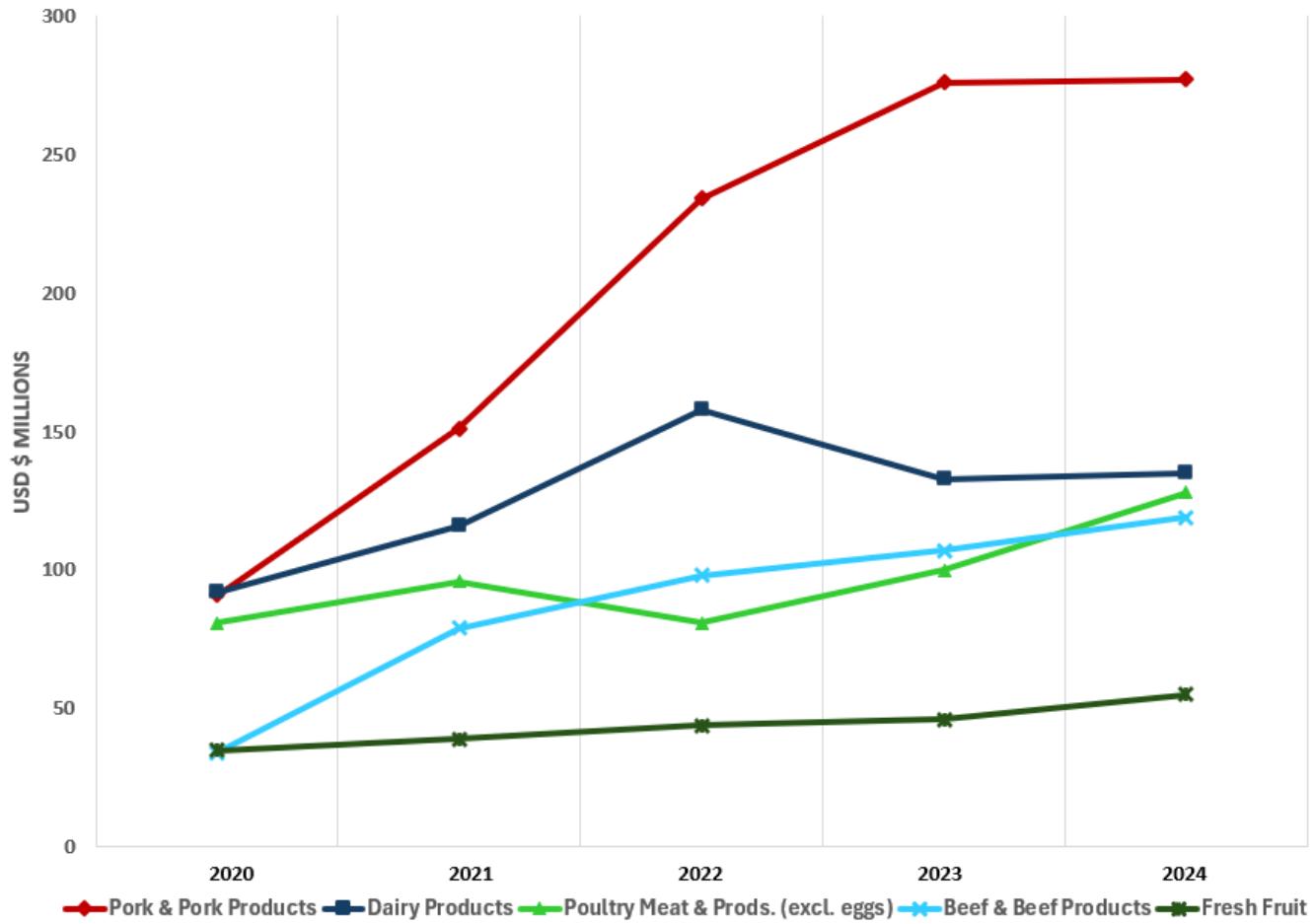


Chart 3. Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau Trade Data

SECTION V: KEY CONTACTS AND FURTHER INFORMATION

Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS/USDA)

United States Embassy in the Dominican Republic
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 Website: www.fas.usda.gov

Please do not hesitate to contact this office for more detailed information about the Dominican food market, lists of importers, major players in the sector, and any other related questions.

Ministry of Tourism

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ASONAHORES (National Hotel & Tourism Association)

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CDCT (Dominican Consortium for Touristic Competitiveness)

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Importers and Warehouses Association (ASODAI)

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Comment: Please contact this office for more detailed information about the Dominican food market, lists of importers, major players in the sector, questions, etc.

Attachments:

No Attachments