

Voluntary Report – Voluntary - Public Distribution

Date: April 13, 2026

Report Number: CH2026-0044

Report Name: Tapping Qingdao's Market Power - Opportunities for US Food and Agriculture

Country: China - People's Republic of

Post: Beijing ATO

Report Category: Food Processing Ingredients, Food Service - Hotel Restaurant Institutional, Retail Foods, Promotion Opportunities

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Report Highlights:

Qingdao, a city with a population of over 10 million, is a major coastal city in Shandong Province and one of China's most important port cities. The city serves as a leading hub for seafood processing, brewing, tree nut processing, wood processing, textile manufacturing, and food distribution. With a well-developed cold-chain logistics network, strong processing capabilities, and deep integration into global trade, Qingdao presents significant opportunities for U.S. agricultural exports. Key product prospects include seafood, beef, brewing ingredients, bakery ingredients, specialty coffee, and fresh fruits. With GDP growth of approximately 5.4 percent and total economic output of roughly \$244.6 billion, Qingdao's per capita disposal income exceeds the national average. Qingdao's increasing affluent consumers and vibrant tourism sector provide strong entry points for premium U.S. agricultural products.

U.S. Agricultural Products Market Entry

Table 1: SWOT Analysis of Qingdao’s Market for Imported Products

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong port and logistics advantages • Well-developed cold chain storage facilities and distribution networks • Port and processing facilities are connected seamlessly. 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Port focuses more on bulk commodities, less on services for high-value packaged products • Intense regional competition from major ports: Shanghai, Tianjin, Dalian and ports in South China. • Local consumers and foodservice operators are accustomed to domestic meat, and seafood products which could be fresh or live.
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rising disposable income • Increasing interest among younger consumers (Generation Z) in premium and sustainable food and beverage products • Inauguration of Sam’s Club this March is expected to boost demand for imported packaged products. • Year-round tourism and conferences activity in the city support demand in HRI sector 	<p>Threat</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uncertainty in U.S.-China political and trade relations, and potential tariff changes, lead to cautious sourcing decisions by importers. • Strong competition from other exporting countries. • Improving quality and availability of domestically produced product alternatives.

Best Product Prospects for U.S. Products

Qingdao’s integrated logistics system, bonded zones, and cross-border e-commerce platforms strengthen its role as a key distribution and consumption center for imported agricultural products in northern China.

Craft beer

With a strong German beer culture anchored by Tsingtao Brewery, Qingdao has a long-established beer consumption tradition. Beer paired with seafood is the most common local dining culture! Core consumers of craft beer products are typically 25-45 years old, with relatively higher income levels and a strong preference for flavor and quality. Imported brewing ingredients, including malt and hops used in IPA, stout, and fruit-flavored craft beers, show promising growth potential in Qingdao’s expanding craft beer segment.

Bakery sector and Specialty Coffee

Qingdao’s relatively high disposable income supports growing demand for specialty coffee and premium bakery products. Industry estimates suggest the city hosts approximately 2,000 coffee shops. The fact that average consumer spending remains lower than in first-tier cities such as Beijing and Shanghai indicates room for growth.

Qingdao port is estimated to handle approximately 12 percent of China's coffee bean imports, supporting a well-developed supply chain for the local coffee industry.

Influenced by Japanese and Korean food culture, consumers increasingly prefer bakery products that are emphasize high-quality imported ingredients, handmade production, reduced sugar content, and minimal additives. Industry sources estimate that Qingdao's bakery sector is growing at approximately 15 percent annually.

Fruit

Qingdao's strong purchasing power, combined with efficient logistics and port infrastructure, has supported growing demand for premium imported fresh fruit. The city is considered one of the most important markets for high-quality fruit in northern China. Popular imported varieties include cherries, blueberries, avocado, and durian, reflecting consumer preference for premium, diverse, and high-quality fruit options.

Beef

Qingdao consumers are increasingly receptive to high-quality imported beef products. Commonly recognized varieties include Angus and Wagyu. Consumers are becoming more knowledgeable about key attributes such as marbling, tenderness, grain-fed, and dry-aging techniques. Imported beef consumption is concentrated in high-end restaurants, business banquets, holiday gift packages, and slowly and increasingly in household dining, indicating expanding consumption scenarios and market potential.

City Overview

City Overview



Qingdao is the economic engine of Shandong province, often considered a sub-provincial city. It is internationally recognized for its port operations, advanced manufacturing base, and strong food and beverage industry.

As a port city located along the Yellow Sea in northeastern China, Qingdao port is one of the top five ports in China by container throughput in 2025 and serves as a major gateway for agricultural commodities. With its geographic proximity to Japan and South Korea, just about a two-hour flight across the Yellow Sea, Qingdao has maintained robust trade relationships these

countries. Qingdao also plays a key role in regional connectivity, including the Belt and Road Initiative and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Demonstration Zone.

Qingdao's traditional industries include home appliances manufacturing, food and beverage production, brewing (represented by Tsingtao Brewery), textiles and apparel manufacturing. In recent years, more industries have emerged including port logistics, automotive manufacturing, high-speed rail and metro vehicle manufacturing, ship building, and marine industries.

For U.S. agricultural and food products, Qingdao serves as an important entry port into China. Major imports include seafood, meat and poultry, tree nuts, dried fruits, cotton, wood products, peanuts, pulses and brewing ingredients. Despite ongoing challenges such as tariffs and increasing international competition, Qingdao remains an important gateway for U.S. exporters seeking access to China's broader consumer market.

Economy Overview

Qingdao has the highest GDP among cities in Shandong province. The city has a population of over 10 million and GDP of approximately \$244.6 billion, with year-on-year GDP growth of 5.4 percent. Qingdao's economy is driven by manufacturing, international trade, port logistics, food processing, and services. The city benefits from relatively higher disposable income levels compared to many inland Chinese cities, supporting steady growth in demand for imported food and agricultural products. Qingdao also serves as a regional consumption and economic center for Shandong province and parts of northern China.

Qingdao City at a Glance 2025 (USD calculated using 2025 average exchange rate of 1 USD = 7.18 CNY)	
Province	Shandong
Population	10.44 million
Land Area	11,293 KM ²
Gross Domestic Product (GDP)	\$244.6 billion
per capita GDP	\$23,422
Per capita disposable income	\$8,737
Growth in per capita disposable income	4.7 percent
Total Retail Sales of Consumer Goods	\$96.9 billion
Tourism Revenue	\$32.5 billion
Foreign Direct Investment	\$376 million
Total Imports	\$53.39 billion
Total Exports	\$74.18 billion

Transportation and Logistics

Qingdao is one of China's most important transportation and logistics hubs, serving as a major gateway for agricultural and food imports in northern China. The city hosts the world-class Port of Qingdao and is well connected by international air routes, high-speed rail networks, and expressways, enabling efficient distribution to key markets across Shandong Province and Northeast China.

Port of Qingdao

The Port of Qingdao handles large volumes of bulk agricultural commodities including soybeans and oilseeds, grains and feed ingredients, vegetable oils and sugar. As a natural deep-water port capable of accommodating the world's largest container vessels, Qingdao ranks among the world's leading ports, fourth globally in total cargo throughput and fifth in container throughput. By the end of 2025, Qingdao port handled approximately 710 million metric tons of cargo and 30.87 million twenty-foot equivalent units (TEU).

The Qingdao Port consists of four major port areas:

- Qingdao Qianwan Port
- Huangdao Oil Port
- Dongjiakou Port
- Dagang Port

The port features 73 berths, including facilities capable of handling vessels up to 300,000 tons, and maintains world-leading operational efficiency through its fully automated container terminal. Its advanced cold-chain infrastructure and efficient customs clearance make Qingdao a preferred gateway for imported seafood, meat, tree nuts, and other consumer-oriented agricultural products.



Air - Qingdao Jiaodong International Airport

Qingdao Jiaodong International Airport serves as a major aviation hub in Northeast Asia with extensive international connectivity. As of early 2026, the airport operates direct passenger flights to key markets across Asia, Europe, the Middle East, and Oceania. The airport remains frequent "shuttle-style" services to South Korea, including Seoul, Busan, Jeju, Cheongju, and Daegu, with approximately 40 daily round-trip flights. Additional regional flights connect Qingdao to Japan (Osaka), as well as major Southeast Asian destinations including Singapore, Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur, and Ho Chi Minh City, with services to Hanoi planned. Long-haul international routes include Moscow, Dubai, Sydney, and London. The airport also maintains regular connections to Hong Kong, Macau, and Taipei.

Together with the maritime infrastructure of the Port of Qingdao, Qingdao Jiaodong International Airport strengthens the city's role as a comprehensive logistics and transportation hub, facilitating the movement of goods and people between China and global markets.

Market for Imported Products

Supported by the world-class Port of Qingdao and well-developed logistics infrastructure, Qingdao has emerged as a major economic and trade center in northern China with a dynamic growing consumer market.

As of 2025, Qingdao's permanent resident population reached approximately 10.44 million, underscoring its role as a major urban center in Shandong Province. The city's economy continued to expand, with GDP reaching \$244.6 billion, representing annual growth of over 5.4 percent.

Consumer purchasing power in Qingdao is relatively strong compared with many other Chinese cities. In 2025, per capita disposable income reached \$8,737, representing 4.7 percent year-on-year growth and exceeding the national average of approximately \$6,041. Qingdao ranked in top ten



among major Chinese cities in per capita disposable income, surpassing cities such as Jinan - the provincial capital of Shandong province, and Tianjin. Qingdao's strong trade orientation also contributes to demand for imported products. In 2025 the city's total foreign trade exceeded **\$127 billion, including \$51.6 billion in imports**. This active trade environment supports a growing market for imported consumer goods, including premium food and agricultural products.

Retail

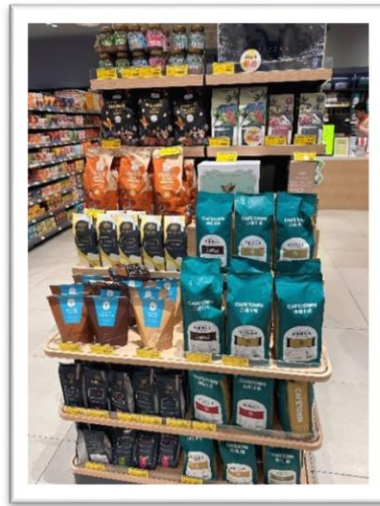
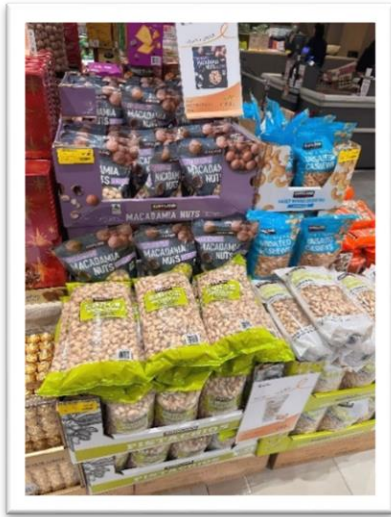


Figure 1: U.S. pistachios at local supermarket

Figure 2: coffee at local supermarket

Major retailers include both international and domestic supermarket chains. Japanese retailer Aeon opened its first store in Qingdao in 1998 and has expanded to four outlets, specializing in imported food and beverage products. Gran Vida supermarket, located in Hisense Square, is one of Qingdao's premier imported food retailers, focuses on premium and high value imported products. Another premium supermarket brand, Ole', located in the MixC shopping complex, targets affluent consumers and international visitors. Membership retailer Sam's Club just began its operation on March 16, 2026, which could further expand the market for imported packaged foods. Additional retailers include:

- Walmart
- Freshippo
- RT-Mart
- Metro
- Yonghui

Key Retail Chain	Store Type	Number of Outlets	Targeted Consumers
Aeon	Supermarket	4	Middle class
Ole	Supermarket	1	Affluent shoppers
Gran Vida	Supermarket	2	Upper middle class
Hema's Freshippo X	Hypermarket	1	Middle class
Hema's Freshippo	Supermarket	8	Middle class
Metro	Hypermarket	1	Middle class
RT-Mart	Supermarket	9	Mainstream shoppers
Yonghui	Supermarket	15	Mainstream shoppers
Li Qun (locally owned)	Supermarket	40	Mainstream shoppers
Jia Jia Yue	Supermarket	60	Mainstream shoppers

Local retailers also play an important role. Li Qun, a Qingdao based retail chain, operates more than 40 supermarkets and over 200 convenience stores. Modern retail trends in Qingdao are increasingly shaped by e-commerce, cross-border e-commerce platforms, and instant retail, creating new channels for imported U.S. food and beverage products.

HRI

As a coastal and tourism-oriented city, Qingdao has a vibrant hospitality industry that supports strong demand for imported and high-quality food and beverage products. International hotels operating in Qingdao include IHG, Marriott, Hilton, etc. Luxury brands such as the Ritz Carlton and Hotel Indigo are expected to establish properties in Qingdao.

Hotel Chain	Number of outlets
IHG	25
Marriott	11
Hilton	6
Hyatt	1
Shangri-la	1
Accor	2



Figure 3: Crab dish in local restaurant

International hotels typically offer varietal cuisine operations, maintain high culinary standards and frequently procure imported ingredients. As a result, these establishments represent important channels for imported food and beverage products.

Qingdao’s dining scene has also been influenced by Japanese and Korean cuisine, reflecting the city’s geographic proximity and longstanding trade relationships with these countries. Restaurants serving international cuisine remain a visible part of Qingdao’s dining scene, offering a wide range of high-quality meat, seafood and alcoholic beverages. At the same time, rising consumer interest in premium meat cuts and safe, traceable seafood is creating new opportunities for imported food and agricultural products.

Western-style restaurants, along with bakeries and cafés, have continued to expand, supported by a growing middle class and steady tourism. Dishes such as pasta, steak, pizza, along with baked goods and specialty coffee, are becoming increasingly popular among local consumers. Industry sources estimate that Western and fusion cuisines segments in Qingdao grew 8-10 percent annually in Qingdao.

Despite the growing presence of international cuisine, Qingdao’s dining culture remains deeply rooted in Shandong cuisine (Lu Cuisine). This regional culinary tradition emphasizes fresh seafood, savory flavors, and light seasoning designed to highlight the natural taste of ingredients. Popular dishes include braised sea cucumber, stir-fried prawns, steamed flounder, and sweet and sour yellow croaker. Local statistics show, Lu Cuisine is estimated to account for approximately 35 percent of full-service restaurants in Qingdao.

As a coastal city, seafood is widely consumed in local restaurants and households. Seafood is often incorporated into a variety of dishes, including dumplings (jiaozi). Imported seafood products such as lobster, scallops, and cod are generally well accepted by local consumers, and chefs in Qingdao are experienced in preparing imported seafood, beef, and other international ingredients.

Agricultural Products and Food Processing

Qingdao serves as a major processing hub for agricultural commodities in northern China. Supported by the Port of Qingdao, the city has developed a comprehensive industrial chain for grain and oilseeds processing led by companies such as Yihai Kerry and Bohai Industrial.

The city also hosts a well-established food processing industry that includes seafood processing, meat and poultry products, dairy products, beverages, baked goods, and prepared foods. Numerous national and provincial-level food enterprises operate in Qingdao, supported by strong cold-chain logistics systems, quality control capabilities, and international certification standards. These advantages allow processing plants to serve both domestic Chinese markets and export markets.

Seafood

Qingdao is one of China's largest seafood processing and trading centers, with an estimated 50-100 seafood processing plants operating in and around the city. These facilities handle significant volumes of imported and domestic seafood that require intensive labor work. China remains one of the world's fastest-growing seafood markets. Demand for imported products continues to grow, driven by rising interest in premium and diverse seafood products, and rising disposable incomes. Processed products that used to be mainly for re-export are now shifting gradually to more direct imports.

Qingdao also hosts one of the World's most influential seafood trade shows - the China Fisheries and Seafood Expo (CFSE), held annually in October. The event provides seafood exporters with valuable opportunities for market exposure, direct buyer engagement, market intelligence, and industry networking with target audiences.

Wood

Qingdao is one of the largest timber import and solid wood furniture industrial clusters in north China. Industry estimates that more than 1,000 timber and furniture enterprises operate in Qingdao. With strong infrastructure, Qingdao has developed a full industrial chain covering timber imports, processing, furniture manufacturing, and online and offline distribution channels. North American timber is widely used in high-end furniture production and customized wood products.



Figure 4: Furniture produced by local enterprise using U.S. wood

Tree Nuts and Dried Fruits

Qingdao is a key hub for nut and dried fruit processing in Northern China. The city has developed mature processing facilities and an integrated supply chain that supports large volume of imports, processing, and domestic distribution. Major processing clusters are concentrated in suburban districts



Figure 5: Dried U.S. cranberry produced by major importer

such as Pingdu, Laixi, and Chengyang, where land availability and industrial infrastructure support large scale operations.

Wolong food Group, inventor of the “daily nuts” concept, is headquartered in Qingdao. Wolong is a national leading brand specializing in tree nuts and dried fruit. Its products target diverse consumption scenarios, meet growing demand for convenient, portable, healthy, and portion-controlled nuts and dried fruits snacks. Qingdao maintains active trade with major suppliers including the United States, Turkey, Vietnam, and Australia in this product category.

Major trade shows and Conferences:

China Fisheries and Seafood Expo: <http://chinaseafoodexpo.com/>

Qingdao International Furniture Fair: <https://www.qiff.net/>

Further Information:

[China: Exporter Guide Annual | USDA Foreign Agricultural Service](#)

[China: Food Processing Ingredients Annual | USDA Foreign Agricultural Service](#)

[China: Retail Foods Annual | USDA Foreign Agricultural Service](#)

[China: Food Service - Hotel Restaurant Institutional Annual | USDA Foreign Agricultural Service](#)

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No Attachments.