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Report Name: An Overview of Saudi Arabia's Potatoes Market

Country: Saudi Arabia

Post: Riyadh

Report Category: Agricultural Situation, Exporter Guide, Potatoes and Potato Products, Trade Policy Monitoring

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Report Highlights:

Potatoes are a staple food in Saudi Arabia, and the country is largely self-sufficient in fresh potato production, which supports a growing potato processing sector and fuels increasing frozen potato exports to neighboring countries. However, the demand generated from the growing hotel, restaurant, and café sector creates opportunities for processed potato imports.

Potatoes planted area and production

Potato cultivation in Saudi Arabia began in the mid-1970s, with support and subsidies from the Saudi government, leading to steady growth in production and harvested areas. In 1975, the Saudi Ministry of Environment, Water, and Agriculture ([MEWA](#)) initiated the Saudi Potato Development Program (SPDP) through a bilateral partnership with the Netherlands, establishing the foundation for domestic potato production. In 2025, MEWA and the Saudi General Authority for Statistics ([GASTAT](#)) announced that local potato production reached 623,770 tons from 17,064 hectares.

According to MEWA, several potato varieties are grown mainly for local consumption and further processing, including Spunta, Cara, Diamond, Mondial, Tyson, and Lady Olympia. Saudi Arabia has two potato production seasons each year, depending on the region and potato variety. The first season starts in September, and harvest occurs between January and February. The second growing season begins in December-January, and the harvest runs from May until the end of June. Potato cultivation is mainly in the central and northern regions of Saudi Arabia.

In Saudi Arabia, potatoes are grown in sandy soil, which gives the tubers ample space to grow without deformation, distinguishing them from those grown in hard soil in the south of Saudi. However, the biggest challenge was not the soil but the groundwater, necessitating innovative irrigation solutions. Farmers have adopted green drip irrigation systems to conserve water and increase yield and productivity. Potatoes are primarily cultivated in regions with suitable water resources and soil. The most prominent potato-growing areas of Saudi Arabia are:

Riyadh: Very active region in winter potato cultivation.

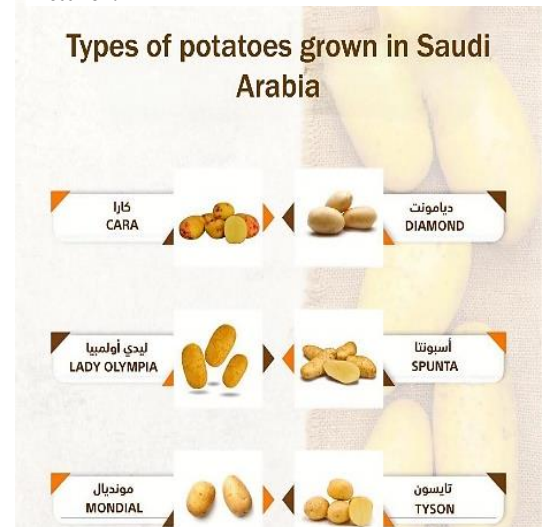
Hail: Considered one of the most critical regions, it accounts for a significant portion of potato production and is characterized by fertile land, a suitable climate, and a focus on modern agricultural techniques. Major potato farming companies operate in Hail.

Al-Jouf: Experiencing success in modern potato farming, characterized by high-quality production and the application of sustainable agricultural practices.

Qassim: One of the traditional potato-growing regions, known for its abundant production.

Tabuk: Tabuk Agricultural Development Company produces large quantities of potatoes that are sent directly to processing facilities.

Picture1.



Source: MEWA

Map 1. Saudi Arabia



Source: CIA fact book

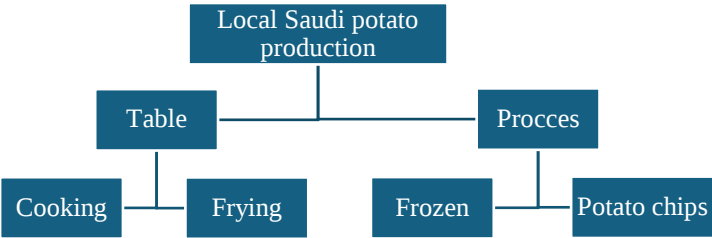
Table 1. Potato production by area

Region	2023		2024	
	Farmed Area (HA)	Quantity (MT)	Farmed Area (HA)	Quantity (MT)
Riyadh	8,627.9	311,429.2	8,848.2	309,685.9
Hail	4,031.8	151,131.2	3,921.2	154,332.8
Qasim	2,193.2	79,165.8	2,131.1	80,156.9
Tabuk	1,447.8	52,258.7	1,435.4	54,394.7
Al Jouf	562.3	20,296.1	511.5	17,729.0
Madena	85.2	3,073.6	74.8	2,693.6
Asir	56.8	1,900.6	63.5	2,232.9
Eastern Province	54.9	1,616.5	54.8	1,695.4
Mekkah	11.5	416.5	11.6	420.0
Najran	8.5	305.1	7.9	285.5
Jizan	3.8	125.7	3.6	112.9
Al Baha	0.9	27.8	0.9	25.8
Northern Border	0.1	4.4	0.1	4.6
Total	17,084.7	621,751.3	17,064.6	623,770.1

Source: Saudi General Authority for Statistics

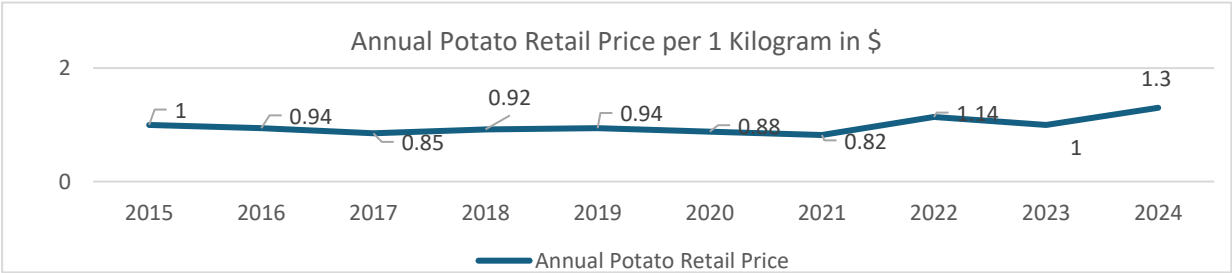
Potatoes market classification (by purpose) in Saudi Arabia

According to industry contacts, local potato production goes into two main categories, depending on the Variety:



1. Table Potatoes (Fresh Market)

This category is mainly for direct culinary use and absorbs around 60 percent of local production. These varieties are distributed to households and restaurants for everyday cooking, including boiling, baking, and frying. During the cultivation season, MEWA bans the export and import of fresh potatoes to protect local production. According to industry sources, domestic retail prices of fresh potatoes increased slightly in 2024 due to higher production costs, including higher seed potato and labor prices.



Source: Saudi General Authority for Statistics

Table potatoes Trade

During the potato cultivation period in Saudi Arabia, MEWA typically bans the import and export of fresh potatoes to protect the local industry. During the off-season, MEWA lifts the ban and implements special procedures for issuing import and export permits.

Table Potatoes Imports

Potato imports are decreasing due to rising local production. FAS Riyadh believes there is still an export opportunity to Saudi Arabia for specialty potatoes, such as red and baby potatoes, due to local expansion in fine-dining restaurants, five-star hotels, and resorts. The tariff on fresh potato imports ranges from 5 to 12 percent. The following table shows the leading countries exporting fresh potatoes to Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Arabia Imports from World Commodity: 070190, Potatoes, Except Seed, Fresh Or Chilled, Nesoi Annual & YTD Series									
Partner Country	Rank	Calendar Year (Tons)					January-March		
		2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2025	2026	%Δ 2026/25
World		49,298	150,253	133,849	64,191	11,751	3,661	1,551	-57.63
Jordan	1	1,093	1,643	4,114	2,999	998	0	920	0
Egypt	2	4,089	51,188	60,036	14,695	4,563	737	505	-31.48
Germany	3	9,233	15,165	277	0	201	0	47	0
Bangladesh	4	241	1,646	1,809	1,631	984	184	41	-77.72
United States	5	99	279	363	364	15	0	12	0
Netherlands	6	152	539	418	364	67	34	12	-64.71
Pakistan	7	79	21,217	9,674	26,573	333	127	11	-91.34
France	8	1,162	3,688	90	449	55	0	2	0
India	9	11,485	26,444	28,610	14,939	4,133	2,388	1	-99.96
Ireland	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Source: Trade Data Monitor									

Pictures from potatoes fields in Hail during winter harvest in December 2025:



Source: FAS Riyadh

Table Potatoes Export

MEWA has implemented strict regulatory oversight on the export of fresh potatoes to bolster national food security and encourage the growth of the domestic value-added processing sector. Under these guidelines, exporters must obtain formal permits and ensure their farms are registered within the MEWA system. Geographically, export eligibility is determined by hydrological conditions: farms situated within Riyadh, Qassim, Hail, Madinah, Tabuk, and Najran may be granted permits pending verification by the Ministry's water agency. Conversely, production originating from the Eastern Province, Al-Jouf, and the Northern Borders is prohibited from export to protect the critical water reserves.

Saudi Arabia Exports to World									
Commodity: 070190, Potatoes, Except Seed, Fresh or Chilled, Nesoi Annual & YTD Series									
Partner Country	Rank	Calendar Year (Tons)					January-March		
		2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2025	2026	%Δ2026/25
World		38	616	486	482	9,753	897	58	-93.53
United Arab Emirates	1	0	193	57	25	4,841	443	58	-86.91
Bahrain	2	38	0	0	46	511	16	0	-100
Egypt	3	0	56	56	0	0	0	0	0
Iraq	4	0	0	0	0	179	0	0	0
Kuwait	5	0	367	318	0	1,606	217	0	-100
Oman	6	0	0	0	154	334	30	0	-100
Qatar	7	0	0	25	258	2,235	191	0	-100
Source: Trade Data Monitor									

Processing Potatoes (Industrial Market)

The potato processing industry in Saudi Arabia is one of the most dynamic sectors of the Kingdom's food production economy. According to industry sources, there has been a massive shift from importing frozen potatoes to establishing a high-tech domestic "Farm to Fryer" pipeline. There are varieties grown explicitly for industrial food manufacturers. Processing varieties are usually contracted in advance and bred for technical performance. These potatoes are selected for traits, such as high starch content, which ensures the right texture after factory processing. The stock is delivered directly to local processing plants, where it is converted into value-added products, primarily frozen goods such as fries and wedges. In contrast, others are processed into potato chips. Many international brands have invested in potato chip manufacturing facilities in Saudi Arabia to meet the local demand and for export to neighboring Middle Eastern countries.

Frozen Potato Imports

While Saudi Arabia has achieved a high level of self-sufficiency in fresh potatoes, the market for processed potato imports remains significant due to the massive demand from the fast-food sector and a growing population. The following table shows the major countries exporting frozen potatoes to Saudi Arabia:

Saudi Arabia Imports from _World									
Commodity: 07101000, POTATOES, FROZEN, Annual & YTD Series									
Partner Country	Rank	Calendar Year (Tons)					January-March		
		2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2025	2026	%Δ

									2026/25
World		18,869	13,620	7,663	5,067	2,068	575	294	-48.87
Egypt	1	11,374	7,896	3,535	3,776	1,533	400	251	-37.25
Netherlands	2	33	135	133	92	457	168	3	-98.21
United States	3	126	133	519	964	70	4	14	250
South Africa	4	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0
Syria	5	5,872	3,898	2,998	0	1	0	0	0
Source: Trade Data Monitor									

Frozen Potato Exports

Saudi Arabia is a major importer of frozen potato products. The export sector for "Made in Saudi" frozen potatoes is currently undergoing a massive transformation, with increasing exports to neighboring countries.

Saudi Arabia Exports to World									
Commodity: 07101000, POTATOES, FROZEN, Annual & YTD Series									
Partner Country	Rank	Calendar Year (Tons)					January-March		
		2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2025	2026	%Δ 2026/25
World		48	308	0	1,008	6,604	1,864	10,916	485.62
United Arab Emirates	1	0	0	0	63	2,297	615	8,692	1,313.33
Bahrain	2	0	0	0	448	1,494	343	110	-67.93
Qatar	3	0	0	0	134	1,043	500	1,363	172.6
Kuwait	4	0	308	0	364	798	321	425	32.4
Oman	5	0	0	0	0	449	85	298	250.59
Iraq	6	0	0	0	0	324	0	0	0
Source: Trade Data Monitor									

Local Consumption

While rice and wheat remain the traditional anchors of the Saudi diet, the potato has evolved into a vital "supporting actor," driven by a massive \$30 billion food service sector projected to grow by \$15 billion by 2032. According to the Saudi General Authority for Statistics (GAS), per capita consumption reached 15.6 kg (34.4 lbs.) in 2024 not including the Kingdom's booming processed snack market. This growth is influenced by an expatriate population comprising nearly 40 percent of the Kingdom, which has catalyzed the demand for frozen products common in international cuisine. This diverse demographic, alongside a youthful domestic population, has fueled the rise of fast-food chains focusing exclusively on high-quality fried potatoes, transforming the potato from a simple side dish into a cornerstone of Saudi Arabia's modern, convenience-driven culinary identity.

Picture 2. Trendy Specialized Potato Restaurant in Saudi



Source: FAS Riyadh.

Seed Potato (Tubers)

Importing potato tubers is highly regulated in Saudi Arabia. Because the Kingdom relies on imported "seed potatoes" to start its domestic growing cycles, the government maintains strict control to prevent the introduction of soil-borne diseases that could ruin desert farmland. Recently, Tissue Culture Labs have been built in regions like Hail to produce Saudi-grown seed tubers. The following table shows seed potato imports:

Saudi Arabia Imports from World									
Commodity: 07011000, FRESH POTATO SEED, Annual & YTD Series									
Partner Country	Rank	Calendar Year (Tons)					January-March		
		2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2025	2026	%Δ 2026/25
_World		28,653	35,213	26,766	37,746	43,423	22,178	19,147	-13.67
Netherlands	1	19,392	22,872	16,196	23,388	25,053	13,174	9,745	-26.03
France	2	3,676	6,218	4,330	6,550	7,802	3,455	2,523	-26.98
United Kingdom	3	4,108	3,699	2,920	4,281	4,687	2,825	2,725	-3.54
Denmark	4	270	2,001	1,849	2,130	3,787	2,173	1,585	-27.06
Belgium	5	53	0	0	104	758	200	0	-100
Bangladesh	6	662	107	346	466	706	188	0	-100
Germany	7	0	101	50	675	329	152	2,509	1,550.66
India	8	485	70	21	44	294	4	29	625
China	9	6	3	0	4	6	6	31	416.67
Egypt	10	0	0	26	0	0	0	0	0
Jordan	11	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
South Korea	12	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Luxembourg	13	0	0	52	104	0	0	0	0
United States	14	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
Source: Trade Data Monitor									

- See Attachment for unofficial translation of Regulations for Importing Seed Potato (Tubers)

Opportunities

FAS Riyadh sees opportunities for exports in the following segments:

- Retail Differentiation: U.S. potatoes carry a reputation for quality and consistency, there is a market gap for specialty varieties (e.g., baby potatoes, specific baking potatoes, fingerlings, potato waffles, or high-nutrient potatoes). Since the hotel, restaurant, and café/catering industry and retail sectors are expanding in Saudi Arabia opportunities will only grow.
- Seed Potatoes: While Saudi Arabia is growing potatoes, it needs the "inputs" to do so, and new specialty varieties of seed potatoes for the processed segment will have a great opportunity among potato farming companies and farmers.
- Visit or participate in the local trade shows: [Saudi Food Trade Show](#) for potatoes and potato products, and [Saudi Agricultural Show](#) for Seed potatoes.

Attachments:

[Rules and regulations for importing potato seeds.pdf](#)