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# **Report Name:** Food Service - Hotel Restaurant Institutional Annual

**Country:** Spain

**Post:** Madrid

**Report Category:** Food Service - Hotel Restaurant Institutional

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**Report Highlights:**

The hospitality industry in Spain continues to grow, driven by the surge in international visitors. Spain, already the world's second most-visited country behind France, is on track to have a record-breaking number of tourists in 2024, with estimates ranging from 90 million to 95 million, surpassing last year's high of 85 million tourists, when numbers already exceeded pre-pandemic levels. This reinforces Spain's tourism sector as one of the key drivers of the Spanish economy. Health, sustainability, and innovation are the biggest trends within the sector, although these trends are facing challenges posed by inflation. The HRI sector in Spain offers excellent opportunities for U.S. food-ingredient and food-product exporters.

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# Market Fact Sheet: Spain

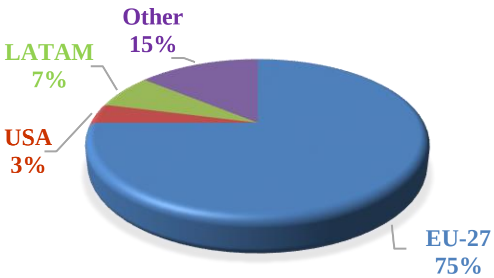
## Executive Summary

Spain is a major producer and exporter of food and agricultural products, with other EU countries as its primary export destination. Spanish producers, processors, wholesalers, retailers, food service operators, and importers are all part of a well-developed agribusiness sector, contributing to a competitive and dynamic domestic scenario. In 2023, Spain's total imports of agricultural and related products reached $65.4 billion, up 2 percent compared to 2022; 57 percent of these imports originated from the European Union.

## Imports of Consumer-Oriented Products

Goods imported into Spain must meet the EU sanitary and phytosanitary requirements to protect human and animal health, as well as requirements under the customs union. Hence, U.S. exporters already exporting to other EU member states will likely meet most of the Spanish import requirements. For the export of animal products, the production plant must be approved for export to the EU.

**Total Imports of Consumer-Oriented Products 2023**




## Food Processing Industry

In 2023, the food-processing sector continued to consolidate its position as an important industrial sector. Spain enjoys a modern food-processing sector that pays special attention to the quality, safety, and traceability of the food products it produces. It has one of the most competitive food processing industries in Europe, which makes this sector an important target for U.S. exports of food ingredients. Industry's interest in developing new products continues to present opportunities for food ingredients.

## Food Retail Industry

The retail competitive landscape remained highly fragmented in 2023, led by major grocery retailers. Within grocery store-based retailing, the competitive environment is concentrated, with Mercadona retaining its leadership, followed by Carrefour. In 2023, due to new consumption habits, internet retailing is expected to continue growing, as retailers continue to invest in eCommerce platforms.

***Quick Facts CY2023***

**World Imports of Consumer-Oriented Products**

$26.77 billion (+13.13%)

**List of Top 10 U.S. Growth Products**

| | |
|---|---|
| 1) Pistachios | 2) Food Preparations |
| 3) Alaska Pollock | 4) Lentils |
| 5) Chickpeas | 6) Hake |
| 7) Sauces | 8) Kidney beans |
| 9) Sweet potatoes | 10) Cranberry juice |

**Food Processing Industry Facts 2023**

| | |
|---|---|
| Food Industry Output | $176 bn |
| Food Exports | $51.7 bn |
| Trade Surplus | $15 bn |
| No. of Employees | 463,900 |
| No. of Food Processors | 28,335 |
| % of total GDP | 2% |

| Top Country Retailers | Sales 2023 (Estimate) ($ Million) |
|---|---|
| 1) Mercadona | 34,300 |
| 2) Grupo Carrefour | 11,800 |
| 3) Lidl | 7,200 |
| 5) Grupo Eroski | 5,700 |
| 6) Alcampov | 5,000 |
| 4) DIA | 4,500 |
| 7) Consum, S.Coop. | 4,500 |
| 8) El Corte Ingles | 3,000 |
| 9) Bon Preu | 2,500 |
| 10) Ahorramas | 2,000 |

**GDP / Population 2023**

Population: 47.5 million

Real GDP (nominal, est): $1.39 trillion

GDP Per capita (nominal, est): $29,198

**Sources:** FIAB, Alimarket, TDM, GATS, Eurostat

## Strengths/Weaknesses/Opportunities/Challenges

| SWOT ANALYSIS | |
|---|---|
| **Strengths** | **Weaknesses** |
| Diversified economic base; modern and well-developed infrastructure | High consumer price sensitivity |
| **Opportunities** | **Threats** |
| Emphasis on health and sustainability; food industry demand for food ingredients | High public debt; low productivity |

**Data and Information Sources:** Euromonitor, Eurostat, TDM LLC; **Contact:** AgMadrid@usda.gov

## SECTION I. MARKET SUMMARY

### Economic Trends

In their latest World Economic Outlook report, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) forecasts a 2.9 percent growth rate for the Spanish economy and 2.8 percent inflation rate in 2024. Despite this projected fall in GDP from 5.5 percent in 2022, the good news is that Spain is expected to weather the storm better than other advanced economies. The growth forecast for Spain's economy is still above the average growth forecast for other advanced economies (including the Euro area, Japan, Canada, etc.). Inflation and concerns of recessions in other major countries' economies all contribute to the lowered growth forecasts.

International tourist arrivals and tourist spending in Spain continue their positive trends. Spain received 73.9 million international tourists during the first nine months of 2024, a 10.9 percent increase from the same period last year. All the indicators lead the sector to forecast that Spain is on the path to break an all-time record, with estimates ranging from 90 million to 95 million. Despite challenges posed by high inflation, from January to September, spending by international tourists grew 16.9 percent to $108 billion.

**Table 1. Advantages and Challenges of the Spanish HRI Market**

| Advantages | Challenges |
|---|---|
| Spain's full recovery of the tourist sector demands foreign products to satisfy foreign visitors' needs, creating opportunities in the hotel and restaurant sectors. | High transportation costs. In addition, small exporters face difficulties in shipping mixed/smaller container loads vs EU competitors or big exporters. |
| Spain's food and hospitality industry relies on imported ingredients, many from the United States, which have a good image and reputation. | Food imported from third countries, including the U.S., must comply with EU food law, labeling, traceability, and packaging laws, which vary from U.S. regulation and practice. |
| Increased demand in retail channels is pushing food processors to be more innovative to provide new offerings. | Adjustments to the overall domestic and international economy (inflation, Ukraine conflict, drought), tourism, and consumer habits. |
| Good network of agents and importers to help get products into the market. | Competition from EU countries, where tastes and traditional products may be better known. |
| New generation of consumers demand healthy, innovative, sustainable products, creating new opportunities. | Lack of consumer awareness of U.S. brands, applicability, and varieties of U.S. products. |
| Distribution structure is modern and many companies cover both Spain and Portugal. | High import tariffs and import regulations impose a price disadvantage on non-EU based companies. |

## SECTION II. ROAD MAP FOR MARKET ENTRY

### Entry Strategy

Success in introducing products in the Spanish market requires local representation and personal contact. A local representative can provide up-to-date market intelligence, guidance on business practices and trade related laws, sales contact with existing and potential buyers, and market development expertise. The Office of Agricultural Affairs in Madrid maintains listings of potential importers and develops sector-specific information to help you introduce your product in Spain.

Goods imported into the EU must meet the sanitary and phytosanitary requirements to protect human and animal health as part of the customs union. Though Spain implements harmonized EU rules and regulations, there are subtleties that exporters should learn about when considering exporting to Spain. For more information, potential U.S. exporters can contact our office for additional sector-specific information. U.S. exporters already exporting to other member states will likely meet most of the requirements for exporting to Spain.

Typically, HRI operators buy their food ingredients from importers or wholesalers. Some large companies buy directly from foreign suppliers. Spain exports around 30 percent (in value) of the Spanish food production, mainly to the EU. Some food-processing companies concentrate on the domestic or on export markets, but most of them will have mixed customers. Companies supplying mainly the domestic market frequently market their products directly and have their own logistics infrastructure. However, customers will vary from wholesalers to buying groups and retailers. Companies producing for re-export may have their own marketing office overseas, local agents, or may work with local importers.

U.S. exporters often face challenges with EU labeling and traceability regulations. Labeling is required for any product that contains genetically modified ingredients. Since consumers have relatively low acceptance of genetically modified foods, food processors, retailers, and the HRI sector are reluctant to purchase these processed products or food ingredients for processing.

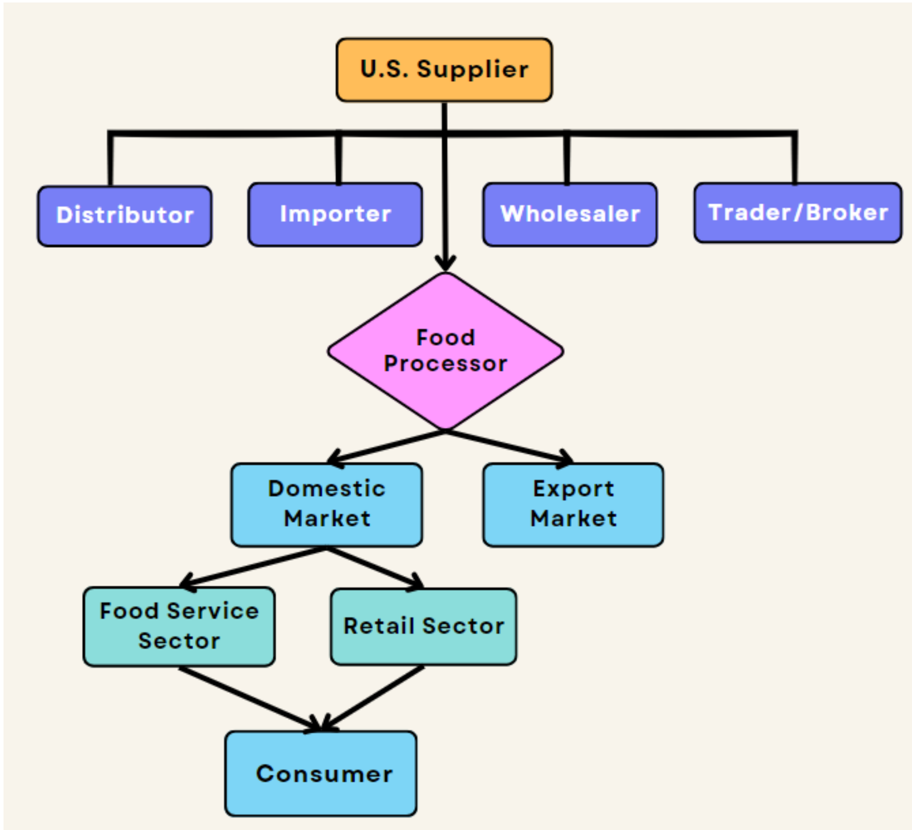
The following documents are required for ocean or air cargo shipments of foodstuffs to Spain: Bill of Lading and/or Airway Bill, Commercial Invoice, and Phytosanitary Certificate and/or Health Certificate when applicable.

If your product is or contains plant or animal products, it will require a phytosanitary or health certificate issued by the competent U.S. authority. If you are exporting animal products, your production facility must be approved to export to the EU. Most food products require an Import Certificate issued by the competent Spanish authority. However, the Spanish importer and/or agent is responsible for obtaining the appropriate Import Certificate. Check the U.S. Mission to the European Union web page for more information, which will guide you on exporting into the EU.

### Trade Shows

Trade shows in Spain offer excellent opportunities for U.S. exporters to contact potential clients from Spain, other EU countries, and other continents. The strong links of Spain with Latin America and its proximity to Northern Africa add value to trade shows in Spain. The most important trade shows related to the HRI sector are: HIP – Hospitality Innovation Planet HRI Professional Expo: Madrid, March 10-12, 2025; and Hostelco: Barcelona, March 23-26, 2026.

**Market Structure**




The HRI supply channels are diverse and serve small and large customers with different needs. Beverage suppliers are very specialized since most beverage consumption takes place in bars, cafeterias, and restaurants. The most important HRI sector suppliers are:

- Importers, Wholesalers, Specialists: Importers and wholesalers supply directly to the HRI sector, particularly the restaurant and hotel chains.
- Commercial distributors: Distributors play an important role in the supply of the food and beverages needs of many small and diverse food service providers.
- Wholesale Markets (*Mercas*): Buyers purchase most perishable products at the wholesale market. The HRI sector is, by tradition, a net consumer of fresh produce.
- Cash & Carry: Open only to businesses and offering very competitive prices, they supply a wide variety of food products, from perishable to non-perishable, domestic and imported. Some cash-and-carry chains have developed outlets that only service the HRI sector.
- Supermarkets and Hypermarkets: Very important to the HRI sector when considering "last minute" purchases and relevant due to their convenient locations.
- Local Producers: Some players in the HRI sector buy directly from local producers, particularly if they are located close to major markets. The food service sector has a tradition of using fresh produce in their daily menus. Many restaurants and hotels, particularly along the coasts, buy directly from local producers and fishermen.

## Sub-Sector Profiles

### Hotels

Spain’s tourism industry data shows an extraordinary recovery in tourism, expecting to receive more tourists in 2024 than ever before. Spain received 73.9 million international tourists during the first nine months of 2024, a 10.9 percent increase from the same period last year. Spain is on track to have a record-breaking year for tourism, with estimates ranging from 90 million to 95 million. This reflects in the number of overnight stays: during the first ten months of 2024, overnight stays increased by 5.2 percent compared with the same period the previous year.

Spain's hospitality industry is experiencing significant growth, fueled by the opening of new hotels and a surge in international tourism. Despite challenges such as economic uncertainty and rising costs, the market is expanding, particularly in the luxury and high-end segments. The recovery of international business travel and a growing preference for more relaxed travel experiences are key drivers of this expansion. The Spanish tourism sector remains a key element of the country's economic development, with the hospitality market continuing to evolve in response to changing customer interests.

**Table 2. Spain – Main Hotel Chains – 2024**

| Company | Total Sales ($ Million)* |
|---|---|
| RIU Hotels & Resorts-RIUSA II, S.A. | $4,000 |
| NH Hotel Group, S.A. | $2,500 |
| Melia Hotels International, S.A. | $2,200 |
| Barcelo Gestión Hotelera, S.L. | $2,000 |
| Iberostar Management, S.A. | $1,800 |

Source: Alimarket; * Estimate

### Restaurants

The hospitality sector continues its recovery after being one of the sectors most affected by the coronavirus crisis and it expects to exceed the figures registered before the pandemic in 2024. Though final numbers are not published yet, the hospitality sector in Spain expects this year to be a record one in both turnover and employment, favored by the strength of international tourism with record breaking number of visitors and increased spending. According to Euromonitor, following a strong performance over the past three years, consumer foodservice sales value in Spain is expected to stabilize and grow at a moderate rate over the next five years.

In Spain, the consumer foodservice industry is undergoing a dynamic shift. Chain operators are consistently expanding their networks, with some U.S. brands (such as Popeyes Louisiana Kitchen and Papa John’s) making ambitious plans to increase their presence in the country. Despite the increased consciousness towards healthier eating habits among local consumers, fast-food leaders Burger King and McDonald’s continue to lead consumer food service in the Spanish market. Their continued success is largely attributed to affordability, convenience, and strong appeal among younger generations.

While independent restaurants still dominate consumer foodservice value sales in Spain, they are facing increasing competition from new and modern establishments. These trends are likely to gradually erode the share of traditional independent foodservice outlets, with a corresponding growth in chain establishments owned by large companies and franchises. One of the main advantages of these brands is their ability to quickly adapt to new trends due to their international exposure and attract new customers through effective marketing and strong brand recognition.

Despite this, independent operators could profit from the growing demand for traditional food, locally-sourced ingredients, and more sustainable options. This, alongside other trends such as the growing interest in plant-based food, presents opportunities for independent players to support local businesses.

**Table 3. Consumer Foodservice by Independent vs Chained by Type: Units/Outlets 2023**

| Outlet Type | Independent | Chained | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| Cafés/Bars | 130,285 | 2,771 | 133,056 |
| Full-Service Restaurants | 59,560 | 2,392 | 61,952 |
| Limited-Service Restaurants | 4,951 | 10,889 | 15,840 |
| Self-Service Cafeterias | 21.0 | 420 | 441 |
| Street Stalls/Kiosks | 1,964 | 266 | 2,230 |
| **Consumer Foodservice by Type** | **196,781** | **16,738** | **213,519** |

Source: Euromonitor International

Health, sustainability, and innovation are the biggest trends within the sector. In this sense, Spanish consumers are becoming more concerned about the origin of the ingredients they consume and are progressively placing more importance on the local market. Recent studies have shown that Spanish consumers are willing to pay more for local produce.

**Table 4. Spain – Leading Food Chains – 2024**

| Company | Total Sales ($ Million)* |
|---|---|
| Food Delivery Brands Group, S.A. | $1,500 |
| Restaurant Brands Iberia, S.L. | $1,400 |
| McDonald's España | $1,300 |
| Alsea Iberia-Food Service Project, S.L. | $1,200 |

Source: Alimarket; * Estimate

**Institutional**

Larger companies dominate institutional food service in Spain, with the top five companies accounting for more than 40 percent of total sales. In addition, there are hundreds of local small companies providing catering and events services. Large institutional food service companies are price sensitive, importing directly, and/or buying products, particularly fresh produce, from local suppliers.

Companies in this category, many focused on the socio-sanitary sector, face a very competitive market marked by rising production and raw materials costs. This situation has forced companies to look for different strategies to maintain margins. In this sense, many of them had to renegotiate their contracts with suppliers and customers. Experts in the sector highlight the fact that this is a market that coexists in a challenging and uncertain context, with less loyal customers that will force them to take on challenges to avoid a decline in profitability.

**Table 5. Spain – Leading Institutional Food Sector Companies – 2024**

| Company | Total Sales ($ Million)* |
|---|---|
| Serunión, S.A. | $600 |
| Eurest Colectividades, S.L. | $400 |
| Aramark Servicios de Catering, S.L. | $350 |
| Mediterranea de Catering, S.L. (Grupo) | $340 |
| Auzo Lagun, S.C. | $280 |

Source: Alimarket; * Estimate

## SECTION III. COMPETITION

Spain's main trading partner is the EU-27. The lack of trade tariffs, trade barriers, and other restrictions often make European goods more attractive and competitive, particularly with price sensitive goods.

**Table 6. Products Facing Competition in the Spanish Market**

| Product Category (TMT; million USD) | Major Supply Sources in 2023 (in value) | Strengths of Key Supply Countries | Advantages and Disadvantages of Local Suppliers |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Frozen Fish**<br>Imports: 259<br>Value: $695 | 1.Portugal-13%<br>2.Netherlands-8%<br>3.Morocco–6% | Other major suppliers offer high quality fish products at competitive prices. | Large competition from local producers. Domestic consumption and exports largely exceed local supply. |
| **Almonds**<br>Imports: 126<br>Value: $437 | 1.USA-73%<br>2.Portugal-11%<br>3.Australia - 8% | Limited competition from other countries. Spanish demand is high, and production is insufficient to satisfy demand. | Spain produces almonds, mostly used roasted as a snack. U.S. almonds are processed, both used domestically or exported. |
| **Pulses**<br>Imports: 792<br>Value: $421 | 1. USA - 15%<br>2. Canada -12%<br>3. Argentina- 10% | Strong competition from Argentina, which greatly increased its presence in recent years, and Canada, a traditional supplier. | Spain is a traditional consumer of pulses and a net importer, as local production is insufficient to fulfill internal demand. |
| **Pistachios**<br>Imports: 15<br>Value: $145 | 1.USA-72%<br>2. Iran -11%<br>3. Germany - 10% | Germany is the main entry point for U.S. pistachios. Iranian pistachios are the competitor in the Spanish market and offer lower prices. | Local pistachio production is growing, but still very limited. Demand continues to grow significantly. |
| **Sunflower Seeds**<br>Imports: 301<br>Value: $339 | 1.France-52%<br>2.China-19%<br>3.Romania-8% | Used for confectionery. Growing competition from China on price; Argentina competitor on quality. | Traditional snack. Local production is insufficient to meet demand. |
| **Sweet Potatoes**<br>Value: $11 | 1.Egypt -27%<br>2.Portugal -22%<br>3.Netherlands–14%<br>4.USA – 14% | Other major suppliers offer high quality products at competitive prices. | Imports from the world and the U.S. have increased considerably in the last five years. Demand and consumption continue to be strong. |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Distilled Spirits** Value: $1,119 | 1.U.K.-29% 2. USA-11% 3. Netherlands -10% | Difference in legal format of alcohol containers; exporters need to adapt to EU size. | Increasing interest in U.S. distilled drinks, mainly bourbon and gin. |

Source: TDM

## SECTION IV. BEST PRODUCT PROSPECTS CATEGORIES

**Table 7. Agricultural and Food Import Statistics**

| AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS IMPORTS ($ Million) | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Total Agricultural and Related Products** | **44,592** | **54,418** | **63,814** | **65,377** | **66,000** |
| Total U.S. Agricultural and Related Products | 1,670 | 1,706 | 2,244 | 2,236 | 2,000 |
| **Total Agricultural Related Products** | **9,963** | **12,735** | **14,659** | **13,108** | **15,000** |
| Total U.S. Agricultural Related Products | 164 | 163 | 187 | 211 | 200 |
| **Total Consumer-Oriented Products** | **19,114** | **21,697** | **23,667** | **26,773** | **25,000** |
| Total U.S. Consumer-Oriented Products | 836 | 761 | 839 | 692 | 800 |
| **Total Seafood Products** | **7,348** | **8,889** | **9,637** | **9,174** | **9,000** |
| Total U.S. Seafood Products | 86 | 82 | 95 | 99 | 100 |

Source: TDM Inc; Unit: $ Million; * Estimate

**Best High-Value, Consumer-Oriented Product Prospects Category**

*Products Present in the Market with Good Sales Potential*

Tree nuts (particularly almonds, walnuts, and pistachios) -- Peanuts -- Pulses -- Sunflower seeds -- Fish and Seafood (frozen) -- Surimi -- Spirits

*Products Not Present in Significant Quantities with Good Sales Potential*

Functional and innovative health food -- Free-from products (lactose-free, gluten-free) -- Specialty and snack foods – Other nuts e.g., pecans -- Sweet potatoes -- Pet foods

*Products Not Present Because They Face Significant Barriers*

Red meat and meat preparations (hormone ban) -- Poultry (sanitary procedures – pathogen reduction treatments) -- Processed food (with GMO ingredients)

## SECTION V. KEY CONTACTS AND FURTHER INFORMATION

If you have any questions, please contact the OAA in Madrid. The FAS website also offers recent reports of interest to U.S. exporters interested in the Spanish market. Additionally, useful contacts include:

**Trade Associations --** Spanish Federation of Food and Beverage Industries; Spanish Federation for HRI Sector; Spanish Association for Distributors and Supermarkets; Spanish Restaurant Chain Association

**Government Agencies --** Spanish Food Safety and Nutrition Agency; Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food

For more information on exporting U.S. agricultural products to other countries, please visit the Foreign Agricultural Service home page at www.fas.usda.gov

**Attachments:**

No Attachments