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2020 Pork Exports Shatter Previous Records; December Beef Exports Outstanding



U.S. pork exports reached nearly 3 million metric tons (mt) in 2020, topping the 2019 record by 11%, according to data released by USDA and compiled by the U.S. Meat Export Federation (USMEF). Pork export value also climbed 11% to a record \$7.71 billion. U.S. beef exports finished 2020 lower year-over-year, falling 5% in both volume (1.25 million mt) and value (\$7.65 billion). But beef exports finished the year with very strong momentum, with fourth quarter volume up 4.5% from 2019 and posting one of the best months on record in December.

“Obviously the surge in demand from China, especially in the first half of 2020, was a driving force behind the record performance for U.S. pork exports,” said USMEF President and CEO Dan Halstrom. “But China was not the only success story in 2020, as exports achieved growth in a broad range of markets. Diversifying export markets is a top priority for USMEF and the U.S. industry, and that strategy paid dividends – especially in the fourth quarter, when exports to China/Hong Kong were down 9% from 2019 but shipments to the rest of the world nearly offset that slowdown.”

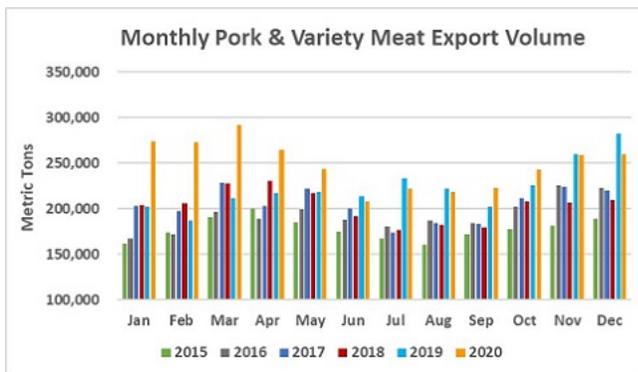
Beef exports were heavily impacted by foodservice restrictions in many major markets but trended higher late in the year, bolstered by very strong retail and holiday demand.

“Consumers across the world responded to the COVID-19 pandemic by seeking high-quality products they could enjoy at home, and U.S. beef and pork definitely met this need,” Halstrom said. “We expect these retail and home-delivery demand trends to continue even as sit-down restaurant dining recovers, creating robust opportunities for U.S. red meat export growth.”

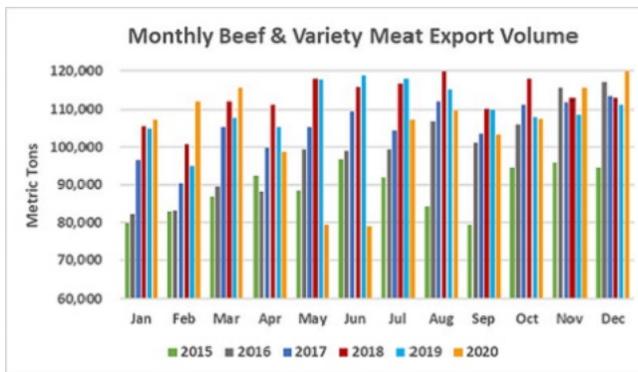
December pork exports totaled 259,654 mt, down 8% from the very large year-ago volume, with value down 10% to \$687.2 million. December muscle cut exports were also down 8% at 219,224 mt, valued at \$590.2 million (down 11%). For the full year, pork muscle cut exports were record-large at 2.51 million mt, up 15% from 2019, valued at a record \$6.67 billion (up 12%).

Pork export value equated to \$59.87 per head slaughtered in December, down 10% from a year ago, but the full-year average of \$58.65 per head was 10% above 2019. December exports accounted for 28.8% of total pork production and 26.1% for muscle cuts, down from the December 2019 ratios of 32.1% and 29.3%, respectively. But for the full year, exports accounted for a significantly higher percentage of both total pork production (29.3%, up from 26.9%) and muscle cuts (26.5%, up from 23.6%).

December beef exports totaled 119,892 mt, up 8% from December 2019 and the largest in nearly 10 years. Export value was \$744 million, up 9% from a year ago and the second highest total on record (trailing only July 2018). December exports of beef muscle cuts were the second largest ever at 93,941 mt, climbing 11% year-over-year in both volume and value (\$659.8 million). For 2020, beef muscle cut exports were down 2% year-over-year at 976,953 mt and fell 5% in value to \$6.77 billion.



<https://www.usmef.org/downloads/Pork-Exports-Final-2020-chart-SFW.jpg>



<https://www.usmef.org/downloads/Beef-Exports-Final-2020-chart-SFW.jpg>

Asian markets shine for beef exports, including new records in Taiwan and China

Demand for U.S. beef exports proved resilient in most Asian markets in 2020, though with substantial shifts from foodservice to retail in some destinations. The limited labor situation challenged exports of certain items, especially variety meats, although December exports of beef variety meats were the largest since March.

Exports to leading market Japan slipped 2% year-over-year to 306,140 mt, with value holding steady at \$1.94 billion. Beef muscle cut exports to Japan climbed 5% to 259,412 mt, with value up 1% to \$1.57 billion. U.S. beef regained market share in Japan, climbing from 41% in 2019 to 44% in 2020, benefiting from the duty reductions in the U.S.-Japan Trade Agreement.

Beef export value equated to \$349.10 per head of fed slaughter in December, up 9% year-over-year and the highest since April. The full-year average was \$302.31 per head, down 2% from 2019. December exports accounted for 15% of total beef production and 12.6% for muscle cuts, exceeding the December 2019 ratios of 14.3% and 11.6%, respectively. 2020 exports accounted for 13.5% of total beef production and 11.3% for muscle cuts, compared to 14.1% and 11.4%, respectively, in 2019.

Pork exports reach new highs in China/Hong Kong, Central America, Chile and Vietnam; strong momentum in Mexico and Japan

Pork exports to China/Hong Kong totaled 1.04 million mt in 2020, up 56% from a year ago, while value climbed 63% to \$2.37 billion. Shipments to the region accounted for about one-third of total U.S. export volume, but this percentage declined later in the year as exports achieved more broad-based growth. While USMEF does not expect 2021 exports to China/Hong Kong to match the levels posted over the past year, the region will still have a strong need for imported pork.

While pork exports to Mexico finished lower in both volume (688,253 mt, down 3%) and value (\$1.15 billion) compared to 2019, the market showed an impressive rebound late in the year. December exports increased 8% to 71,426 mt, the third consecutive month of year-over-year volume growth.

Pork exports to Japan also gained momentum in the fourth quarter (up 12%) as the U.S. industry continued to capitalize on tariff relief provided in the U.S.-Japan Trade Agreement. 2020 exports to Japan finished 5% higher than a year ago at 386,700 mt, with value up 6% to \$1.63 billion. U.S. market share rebounded to 36% of Japan's total pork imports, up from a low of 31% in 2019.

Other 2020 highlights for U.S. pork exports include:

- Led by strong growth in Honduras and Nicaragua, exports to Central America topped the previous record set in 2019 by 1% in both volume (99,222 mt) and value (\$241.1 million). This marked the sixth consecutive year for record pork exports to the region.
- While pork exports to South America were substantially lower in 2020, Chile emerged as a bright spot with surging fourth-quarter demand. Exports to Chile finished the year 16% higher at 49,828 mt, with value up 11% to \$135.6 million. U.S. pork gained market share in Chile, as total imports were similar to 2019 but Chile's exports surged, with more than 70% of its export volume bound for China. U.S. exports to Colombia, the regions' largest destination for U.S. pork, declined sharply due to COVID-19 restrictions and a slumping Colombian peso, but demand showed strong signs of recovery late in the year and in early 2021.
- Despite a slow start to the year, exports to the Philippines were 15% higher in volume (46,665 mt) and jumped 24% in value (\$115 million), finishing just short of the record levels of 2018. Exports to Vietnam were record-large at 25,183 mt, up 82%, with value nearly tripling to \$54.4 million. It was also a record year for ASEAN region, with exports up 28% in volume (77,149 mt) and 43% higher in value (\$186.3 million).
- Strong demand in the Dominican Republic and Trinidad and Tobago pushed exports to the Caribbean 10% higher in volume (57,353 mt) and 5% higher in value (\$136.8 million). Trinidad and Tobago is the region's top destination for pork variety meats, with 2020 exports climbing 58% to a record 1,736 mt, valued at \$3.1 million (up 72%).

Beef exports to South Korea also held up relatively well, though shipments trailed the 2019 record by 4% at 246,231 mt, valued at \$1.72 billion (down 6.5%). U.S. beef made substantial market share gains in Korea in 2020, capturing nearly 53% of total imports (up from 51.5% in 2019) and 64% of chilled imports (up from 62%). Korea's imports of U.S. chilled beef set another new record in 2020, totaling 62,825 mt (up 14.5%).

The U.S.-China Phase One Economic and Trade Agreement took effect in March, making beef from a much larger percentage of U.S. cattle eligible for the rapidly growing Chinese market. The U.S. industry capitalized in a big way, with exports quadrupling year-over-year to a record 42,813 mt, valued at \$310.2 million (up 260%). Since September, the U.S. has surpassed Australia as the largest supplier of grain-beef to China.

Other 2020 highlights for U.S. beef exports include:

- Exports to Taiwan set a new volume record for the fifth consecutive year at 63,752 mt, slightly exceeding 2019, though export value slipped 3% to \$551.7 million. The United States continued to dominate Taiwan's chilled beef imports in 2020, capturing 76% market share.
- While beef exports to Mexico were significantly lower year-over-year, demand has rebounded in recent months. In December, beef muscle cut exports to Mexico reached 16,647 mt, the largest volume since 2009. Total December export volume was 27,230 mt, up 25% from a year ago, with value up 23% to \$127 million. For the full year, exports to Mexico finished 18% below 2019 at 192,951 mt, valued at \$852.6 million (down 23%).
- Following a down year in 2019, beef exports to Canada rebounded to 108,227 mt, up 8% year-over-year. Export value increased 11% to \$727.5 million.
- Africa continued to emerge as a growing destination for beef variety meats, led by strong demand in South Africa, Gabon, Cote d'Ivoire and Ethiopia. Variety meat exports to the region increased 35% to 26,450 mt, valued at \$20.1 million (up 32%).

Revised 2020 lamb export results show year-over-year decline*

In April 2021, USDA released several adjustments to the 2020 export results for U.S. lamb and lamb variety meat. These changes resulted in a reduction of 7,157 mt of the previously reported export total, so the actual 2020 export totals were 12,890 mt, down 18% from 2019, valued at \$17.3 million (down 34%).

USMEF is in the process of entering the adjusted monthly totals to our statistics web page.

Complete 2020 export results for U.S. pork, beef and lamb are available from USMEF's [statistics Web page \(http://www.usmef.org/news-statistics/statistics/\)](http://www.usmef.org/news-statistics/statistics/).

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NOTES:

- *Export statistics refer to both muscle cuts and variety meat, unless otherwise noted.*
- *One metric ton (mt) = 2,204.622 pounds.*
- *U.S. pork currently faces retaliatory duties in China. China's duty rate on frozen pork muscle cuts and variety meat increased from 12% to 37% in April 2018, from 37% to 62% in July 2018 and from 62% to 72% on Sept. 1, 2019. The rate on pork cuts was reduced to 68% on Jan. 1, 2020, through a reduction in the most-favored-nation (MFN) rate and to 63% on Feb. 14, 2020, through a reduction in the Section 301 retaliatory duty. The duty on pork variety meat was reduced to 67% on Feb. 14.*
- *U.S. beef faces retaliatory duties in China. China's duty rate on beef muscle cuts and variety meats increased from 12% to 37% in July 2018 and from 37% to 47% on Sept. 1, 2019. It was reduced to 42% on Feb. 14, 2020.*
- *In February 2020, China announced a duty exclusion process that allows importers to apply for relief from duties imposed in response to U.S. Section 301 duties. When an application is successful, the rate for U.S. beef can decline to the MFN rate of 12% and the rate for U.S. pork can decline to 33% for muscle cuts and 37% for pork offal (the 25% Section 232 retaliatory duty on U.S. pork remains). Some importers reported receiving duty relief beginning on March 2, 2020.*
- *Mexico's duty rate on pork muscle cuts increased from zero to 10% in June 2018 and jumped to 20% the following month. Beginning in June 2018, Mexico also*

*imposed a 15% duty on sausages and a 20% duty on some prepared hams.
Mexico removed all duties in late May 2019.*

**Revised to reflect adjustments released by USDA*

Posted February 8, 2021

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