



FACT SHEET

August 2009

FAS OVERSEAS REPORTING AND THE GLOBAL AGRICULTURAL INFORMATION NETWORK REPORTING

Reporting

The Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) has staff in 99 offices in 80 countries around the world. FAS foreign service officers and foreign nationals also monitor and report on agricultural trade issues in an additional 66 countries. FAS' total worldwide reporting covers agricultural issues in nearly 150 countries.

FAS overseas staff are the eyes and ears of U.S. agriculture abroad, serving both American farmers and agricultural exporters, as well as USDA policy makers. As U.S. diplomats, FAS agricultural attachés have unparalleled access to foreign government officials and expert knowledge of foreign agricultural market conditions. Having FAS staff in countries where critical events are happening allows us to provide timely reporting on breaking events and key policy decisions affecting agricultural trade. FAS agricultural experts:

- Report and analyze changes in the policies of foreign governments and trading blocs that affect U.S. agricultural exports;
- Report and analyze how multilateral trade agreements, such as the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the North American Free Trade Agreement, affect U.S. exports;
- Report on new international developments and major issues impacting global agricultural trade such as bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), avian influenza, and agricultural biotechnology;
- Assess marketing opportunities for U.S. agricultural products; and
- Monitor crop developments in major producing countries.

The GAIN System

To help disseminate critical agricultural knowledge to USDA decision makers and the public, FAS developed the Global Agriculture Information Network (GAIN). GAIN is a web-based system that allows users to search FAS' database of overseas reports from 1995 to the present. Users can search reports by date range, country, commodity, or key word in the title. FAS overseas offices submit

more than 3,000 reports per year, approximately half of which are scheduled periodic reports.

Types of Information in GAIN

The FAS global electronic reporting system provides information on a wide range of subjects pertaining to international agricultural trade, production, and policies. FAS posts report on current developments affecting agricultural trade on a continual basis, but also submit scheduled periodic reports. Some of the major categories of scheduled reports include:

- Trade Policy Reports. Exports of U.S. agricultural products are affected by a myriad of ever-changing trade policies. Each September, FAS field offices prepare “Food and Agricultural Import Regulations and Standards (FAIRS)” reports, which cover more than 40 major markets for U.S. products. FAS posts report annually on export certificate requirements in all countries covered. They also provide frequent updates on changes in foreign policies affecting agricultural trade and developments in multilateral trade agreements, such as the WTO.
- The Food and Agricultural Import Regulations and Standards - Narrative reports are not the definitive or final source for all regulations. While every possible care was been taken in the preparation of this information, U.S. exporters should always verify the full set of import requirements with their foreign customers and local authorities. **FINAL IMPORT APPROVAL OF ANY PRODUCT IS SUBJECT TO THE IMPORTING COUNTRY’S RULES AND REGULATIONS AS INTERPRETED BY BORDER OFFICIALS AT THE TIME OF PRODUCT ENTRY.**
- Agricultural Biotechnology. This annual report is typically published in the fall. Biotechnology-related trade policy, marketing, and food assistance issues are among the U.S. agricultural community’s most significant new challenges. This report collects information on a country’s agricultural biotechnology policies for USDA policy makers and a broad range of FAS constituents, including farmers, food processors, exporters, and technology providers.
- Commodity Reports. FAS overseas offices provide information on international production, consumption, and trade of most commodities of interest to U.S. agricultural producers. Countries selected for scheduled periodic (e.g., annual, semi-annual, or monthly) commodity reporting are either major producers of, or major markets for, a specific commodity. Most annual and semi-annual reports contain production, supply, and distribution (PSD) tables. These tables contain three years of data: past, current, and forecast. This provides a complete snapshot of the commodity situation, including trade, storage, and use data. Commodity updates are submitted whenever changes in local conditions, policies, or situations are expected to impact the international market. These reports provide U.S. exporters with analysis of implications for U.S. trade. It should be noted that PSD data in GAIN reports are preliminary, unofficial raw data. Official USDA PSD data are determined after analyzing all overseas reports and drawing on additional sources, including more than 1,500 documents received from private and public sources around the world, global weather information, and satellite imagery analysis. After this analysis, official USDA data are released in USDA’s “World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates” monthly report and in FAS’ “world production, market, and trade reports.”

- Market Reports. Up-to-date country market information helps U.S. agricultural producers identify and export to foreign markets. “Product Briefs” provide an assessment of the market for specific products, including the size of the market, factors affecting demand for U.S. products, and market promotion opportunities. “Exporter Guides” provide basic information on marketing and exporting agricultural products to more than 75 countries. “Market Research Reports” analyze market distribution systems for various sectors, such as the food retail, food processing, or hotel, restaurant, and institutional (HRI) sectors.

Accessing GAIN

GAIN reports can be accessed electronically on the FAS Home Page at <http://www.fas.usda.gov/scriptsw/AttacheRep/default.asp>. A link at the top of this page helps users subscribe to daily or weekly e-mailed summaries of foreign agricultural reports.

For more information on the GAIN system, search engine, or subscriptions, contact the FAS Knowledge Management Staff at Reports. Officer@fas.usda.gov.