U.S. Food Market Highlights:
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Food markets
Total U.S. food consumption (2004): $600-900 billion.¹
Total retail food sales in U.S. (2003): $450 billion
Estimated share of these sales that accrues to farmers (2003): $40 billion.³
Estimated retail food sales at Wal-Mart and Sam's Club: $80 billion.⁴
Percent of food industries that lack competitiveness (2002): 85%.⁵
Month in which it is estimated the U.S. will become a permanent food importer (2005): December.⁶

Employment
Total U.S. food retail employment (2003): 3.4 million.⁷
Retail sales per employee (2003): $127,000
Total U.S. farm proprietor and labor employment (2002): 3.0 million.⁸
Farm sales per worker (2002): $66,000

Commodity sales
Total farm commodity sales in U.S. (2002): $200 billion.⁹
U.S. Government payments to commodity producers (2002): $11 billion.¹⁰
Estimated value of food produced in gardens nationally for private use (1994): $19 billion.¹¹
Direct Sales
Food sold directly from farms to consumers (2002): $812 million. (Many consider this USDA count low).

Average distance traveled by an item of food in the Midwest (2001): 1,500 miles.

Energy use
Percent of U.S. energy consumption devoted to food production, processing and distribution (1976): 17%.

Annual cost of this energy used in food system, at current consumption rates (2005): $139 billion.

Natural and organic food sales

Estimated sales of "natural" products (2003): $43 billion (excludes superstore chain sales. Includes food plus supplements, personal care items, etc.)

Estimated sales of "natural" foods (2003): $18 billion (includes in total product sales listed above, excludes superstore chain sales)

Estimated sale of "organic" foods (2005): $13.8 billion (excludes superstore chain sales)

Current growth rate in organic sales (2002): 16%

Current growth rate in organic sales in Europe (2002), seen by some as indicator for future rates in U.S.: 7.8%

Current growth rate for supermarket food sales (2003): 2-3%

Supermarket share of organic food sales (2003): 37%

Estimated total potential market for organic foods: $15 to $100 billion by 2030.

School lunches
Percent of public school students in the U.S. whose families earn so little they qualify for free and reduced school lunch (2000): 50%

Percent of U.S. households that are "food insecure" (that is, who are not sure at some point during the year from where their next meal may come (2000): 10%

Health and weight concerns
Percent of U.S. adults who are overweight or obese (1998): 65%

Percent of elderly seeking medical care who are undernourished: (1996): 50%

Percentage of deaths in the industrial world that are related to diet: (2000): 50%

Number of Americans who die from food poisoning each year (2001): 5,000.
Number of obese people in the world (2006): 300 million

Number of overweight people in the world (2006): 1 billion

Number of hungry people in the world (2006): 600 million

Number of U.S. coronary cases that could be prevented by eating 1% less fat (1999): 30,000

Number of gastrointestinal diseases treated each year in the U.S. (2001). 76 million (one for every four Americans)

Annual medical costs of obesity in U.S. (2002): $118 billion. (this is 14% of what Americans pay for food each year.)

Credit sources

A mount of money directed to farmers by all federal programs (1933-2005): $775 billion (in 2005 dollars).

Farmer interest payments (money flowing out of farm sector) less federal farm payments (money returned to farm sector) (1913-2005): $591 billion (in 2005 dollars).

Ratio of the average size of a bank in the U.S. to what economists consider the most efficient size (2000). 1000 times larger.

For further details, see also:


To see recent findings from this and other "Finding Food in Farm Country" studies, see http://www.crcworks.org/fffc.pdf.

To view related materials: http://www.crcworks.org/rural.html.
Sources:


4. Feedstuffs (2004). July 5, 5. Wal-Mart and Sam's Club are the top two food retailers in the U.S, after less than 20 years in the retail food business.


Traynor Spencer and Rea, 1.

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36 Colditz, Graham, "The Economic Costs of Obesity and Inactivity," unpublished manuscript from the Harvard School of Public Health, cited in Gardner, Gary; & Halweil, Brian (2000). A higher estimate of costs of obesity was released in an e-mail broadcast by Paul Hawken, director of the Natural Capital Institute, on April 25, 2002.


