

Vegetable & Fruits

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DRIED FRUITS & NUTS

General consumer awareness of dried fruits and nuts still remains low, because most are traditionally used as ingredients in the production of confectioneries and bread-making, rather than direct consumption, and the distribution route is limited. Also, dried fruits and nuts have higher prices than peanuts, etc., so consumption has not expanded. However, taste has diversified beyond almonds and raisins in the past few years. The high nutritional value of dried fruits and nuts, such as dietary fiber and abundant vitamins, has started to be recognized, and a health food image has started to form as the health-consciousness and beauty interests of consumers increase. Popularity is expected to increase and demand is expected to expand, as dried fruits and nuts are consumed as supplements and are used as part of dietary supplements by more women and young people in the future.

Various nutrients have gained consumer attention in Japan recently, especially as consumers begin to recognize the various functions of nuts, such as those containing oleic acid (mono-unsaturated fatty acid) to reduce cholesterol, and abundant dietary fiber to slow digestion and encourage effective dieting. As such, each manufacturer aims to expand the demand for nuts, not as traditional snacks, but by promoting them as health food, such as the introduction "no-salt types" which can be eaten everyday without concern to salt content. And for dried fruits, not only traditional items such as raisins and prunes, but also other kinds, such as mangos, figs, and berries are for sale, and individually packaged products in the handy, carrying packages with a zipper are now sold, for casual eating as a snack have become available.

The distribution route for dried fruits and nuts is expanding not only to general supermarkets, but also convenience shops, general merchandise stores, 100-yen shops etc., so availability to consumers at these stores is increasing. Also, regarding almonds, walnuts, raisins, and prunes produced in the U.S, U.S. industry groups are actively developing PR activities to increase demand in Japan. Various programs are planned to raise the awareness by consumers, such as health seminars and new menu development through tie-ups with various groups, in addition to advertisements via the mass media and Internet.

Circumstances of the Distribution

The distribution route for most dried fruits and nuts is aimed at the industrial food industry as ingredients for confectioneries and bread-making, rather than direct delivery

to consumers. Regarding the commercial distribution route, although the prepared mangoes are packed by the importer and seller, and then distributed through the food wholesaler route, confectionery wholesaler route, and retailers, for imported raw nuts, they are processed into products by the process manufacturer, divided into packages, then distributed through the food and confectionery wholesaler route and retailer market.

Dried fruits and nuts are directly marketed by the import and process manufacturers to the food processing manufacturers of chocolates, the main users, and other confectionery and bread making manufacturers, and the small sized food processing manufacturers are supplied by confectionery ingredient wholesalers. In addition, liquor shops (as side dish snacks for alcohol) are supplied by specialized wholesalers through food warehouse dealers and confectionery warehouse dealers.

Countries that export dried fruits to Japan are the US and China as well as EU countries such as France and Germany, the Middle East such as Turkey and Iran, Latin America, Africa, and Asia, totaling 31 countries and regions. Of this, US accounts for 70.8% in value and 71.8% in volume, creating a large gap between the 2nd largest China and all the other countries. The US is at an overwhelming position when it comes to exports to Japan.

Market shares of imported products on a value basis are as below. In the domestic market, pistachios from the nuts category are all imported from overseas. For dried fruits, raisins are not suitable for the humid Japanese climate, so most are imported.

- Raisins: US 87.7%, Turkey 4.6%, followed by Chili, Australia, South Africa
- Figs: Turkey 41.8%, US 41.1%, followed by Iran, Switzerland, France
- Apricots: US 53.1%, Turkey 29.1%, followed by South Africa, China, Australia
- Pistachios: US 80.9%, Iran 10.6%, followed by Italy, Australia, France

