

## Fruit & veg consumed in the U.S. is often from abroad

According to the U.S. Agriculture Department's Economic Research Service, America's produce industry has shifted from being domestically driven to one dominated by imports.

The New York Times explains how between 1975 and 2016, the percentage of imported fruit and vegetables increased from 27% to 53%. Meanwhile, vegetables went from 5.8% imported to 31.1% over the course of the same 40 years. The U.S. now imports more produce because of improved infrastructure, adapted growing practices, lowered foreign labour costs, and up-ticks in Americans' incomes.

Policy changes at the Department of Agriculture, which has issued some 100 rules over crop sourcing during the last several decades, have opened the gate to approving more imported produce as well. Fruits and vegetables from places such as China, Brazil, and New Zealand were previously barred from sale in the U.S. because of invasive pests and diseases. Now, these areas can export to the U.S. with the help of orchard inspections, sprays, and bagging.

According to an article on foodandwine.com, there is an upside to the switch from domestic to imported goods. Because imports often cost less than domestic products, shoppers can enjoy lower prices. What's more, consumers are able to buy items that aren't seasonally available in the U.S., such as berries, grapes, stone fruit, mangoes, avocados, asparagus, limes, and squash. And while some produce does lose its nutritional value with time, there appears to be no evidence that imports have a significantly lower overall nutrient content.

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