

USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

GAIN Report

Global Agricultural Information Network

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The Netherlands Horticulture Market

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Agricultural Situation

Vegetables

Fresh Fruit

Approved By:

Susan Phillips

Prepared By:

Susan Phillips

Report Highlights:

This report examines the Dutch trade of horticultural products as defined by HS Chapters 06 Live trees and plants, Chapter 07 Vegetable products, and Chapter 08 Edible fruits and nuts. World trade in these products reached \$173 billion in 2015. The Netherlands, a global player, had a 13% share of the world market valued at \$22 billion.

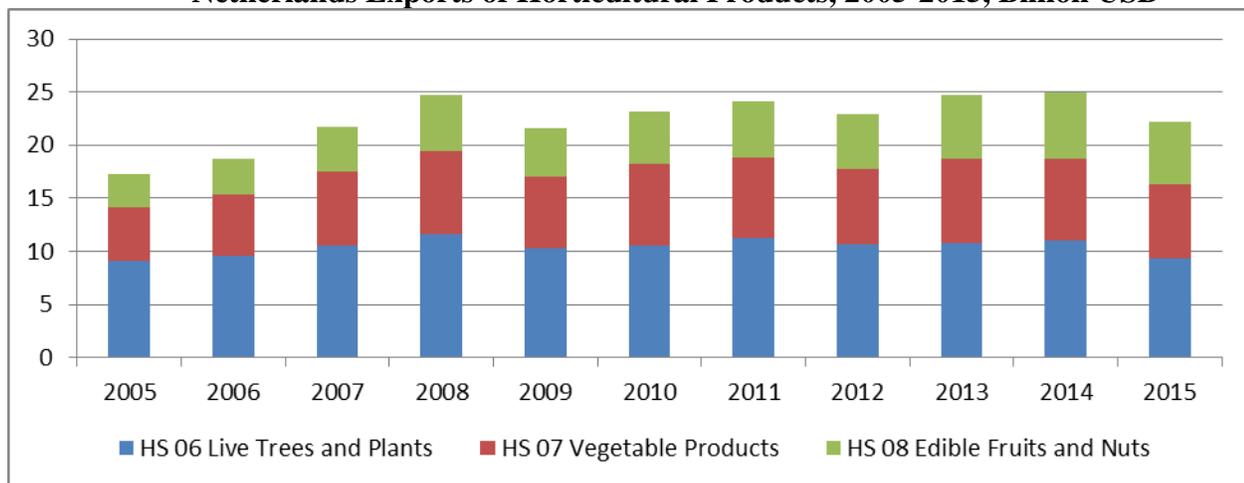
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Section I. Market Overview

In contrast to its small size and population, the Netherlands is a powerhouse when it comes to the production and trade in horticultural products. The Netherlands is the largest exporter of live trees and plants and the third largest exporter of vegetable products. Within the European Union, they are the fifth largest producer of vegetables and the tenth largest producer of fruit. The Netherlands also plays a key role in horticultural logistics. Over seventy percent of imported fruit and eighty percent of imported flowers and vegetables are re-exported. Many third country suppliers find it more efficient and less costly to ship their products through the Port of Rotterdam, especially those destined for Belgium and Germany.

Netherlands Exports of Horticultural Products, 2005-2015, Billion USD



Source:

Global Trade Atlas®

Note: For the purposes of this report horticultural products are defined by the Harmonized System (HS) Chapters 06 Live trees and plants, Chapter 07 Vegetable products, and Chapter 08 Edible fruits and nuts.

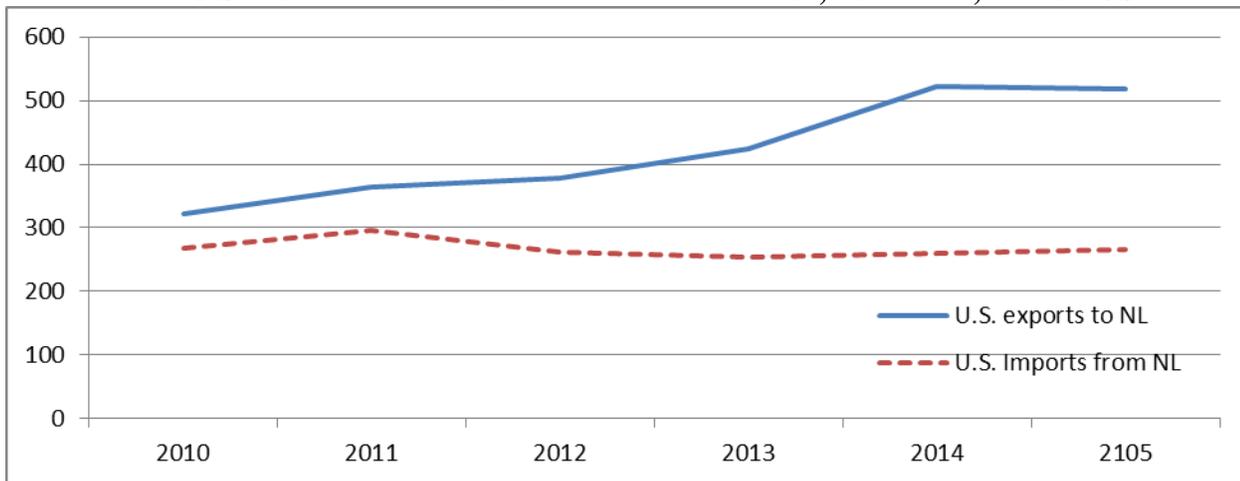
In 2015, the Netherlands exported \$22 billion worth of horticultural products, an 11 percent decline from the previous year, but still a significant 13 percent of world market share. U.S. exports of horticultural products were valued at \$17 billion, a 10 percent world market share. Exports from the top three global suppliers declined in 2015, while competition from China and Mexico has been steadily growing.

The European Union is the largest trading partner for Dutch horticultural products; 85 percent of all Dutch horticultural exports (\$18.9 billion) are to the other EU member states with Germany the largest customer by far, accounting for 38 percent of all Dutch exports to the EU. Horticultural trade with countries that have a European Free Trade Agreement which include Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland represent 4 percent of trade (\$1 billion) for the Netherlands. After Europe, the United States is the next largest market for Dutch horticultural products with a 1.7 percent share (\$370 million), Russia with a 1.4 percent (\$319 million), and China with .6 percent share (\$125 million).

The United States imports \$370 million of horticultural products from the Netherlands, a value which has been fairly stable over the past few years. The Netherlands is our 9th largest market valued at \$517

million, three percent of U.S. total horticultural exports. Major U.S. horticultural exports to the Netherlands include tree nuts, foliage and sweet potatoes.

U.S. Horticultural Trade with the Netherlands, 2010-2015, Million USD



Source: Global Trade Atlas®

Greenports

Greenport is the term used in the Netherlands for a major horticultural geographic area in which horticultural products are grown and traded. The concept of greenports was introduced in the Ministry of Environment’s 2004 National Spatial (or Land Use) Strategy. It is based on the idea of a port or transportation hub and each of the greenports have a connection with a major transportation hub. Within these greenports, there is a strong component of cooperation among industry, government, education and research institutions, and together they focus on collaboration and innovation.

Designated Greenport Areas in the Netherlands

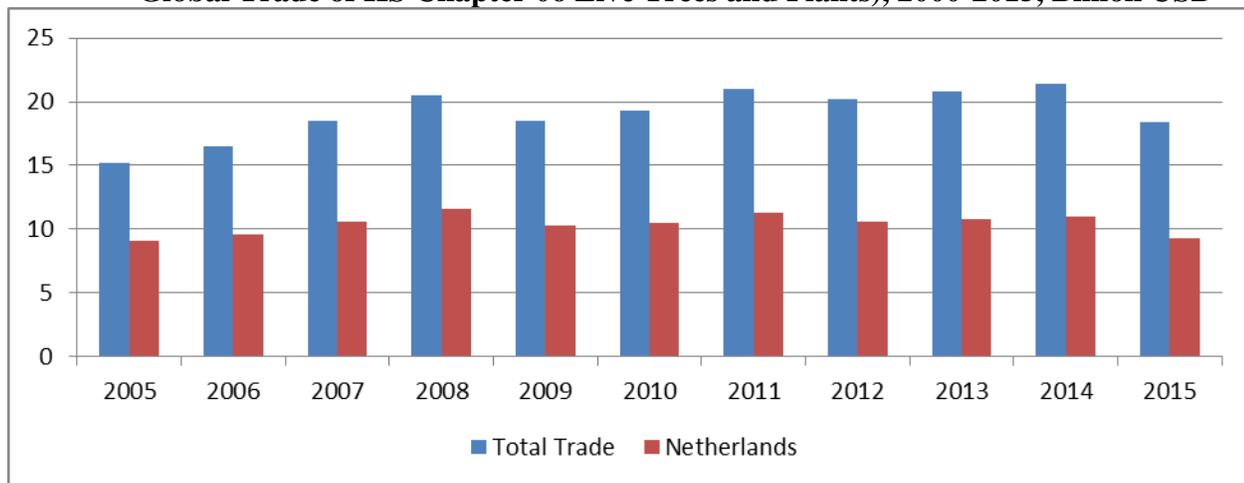
Greenport Westland-Oostland	This area is the largest international greenhouse horticulture area in the Netherlands.
Greenport Venlo	This greenport will concentrate mainly on markets like Germany and Central Europe.
Greenport Aalsmeer	Floriculture, breeding, propagation, production, sale and trade are concentrated on limited acreage, but with a logistical advantage of being close to Schiphol Airport.
Greenport Duin en Bollenstreek	This greenport focuses more on the cultivation of flower bulbs and is a tourist destination. It is one of the greenport areas where housing, employment and tourism are linked.
Greenport Boskoop	The greenport is well known for tree and shrub crops.
Greenport Noord-Holland Noord (also known as Agriboard)	Known for its large vegetable, potato and fruit production, as well as bulbs, flowers and ornamental plants.

1. Chapter 06 Live Trees, Plants, and Bulbs

The Netherlands is the number one exporter of floriculture: cut flowers, bulbs (mostly tulips), and live plants (mostly mushroom spawn) with about a 50 percent share of the global market. In 2015, the Netherlands exported over \$9 billion of these products, 86 percent of which went to other European member states, mostly Germany, UK, and France.

The floriculture trade is becoming more competitive as countries closer to the equator with more favorable growing conditions are steadily gaining market share. At the same time, the market is no longer growing as in the past. According to Rabobank, this is due partly to economic circumstances, in particular in the case of cut flowers which have a high correlation with disposable income.

Global Trade of HS Chapter 06 Live Trees and Plants), 2000-2015, Billion USD



Global Trade Atlas®

Source:

Bulbs

The area planted to flower bulbs has increased by 75 percent over the past 35 years. Most flower bulbs are still grown in the province of North Holland, but cultivation is spreading across the entire country. The most commonly cultivated flower bulb is the tulip. According to Statistics Netherlands (CBS), tulips are grown on almost half of all flower bulb fields. In 2015, about 62,000 acres were planted to flower bulbs, a new record. In addition to tulips, lilies, daffodils, hyacinths, and gladioli are grown.

Netherlands Exports of Bulbs (HS 0601) to the World

	2015 Million USD	2015 Market Share	Change 2015/2014
World	\$1,045.8		-16.19
Germany	\$133.1	12.73	-36.14
United States	\$121.8	11.65	-13.39
China	\$81.6	7.80	13.87

Source: Global Trade Atlas®

The Netherlands exported over \$1 billion of bulbs in 2015, a decrease of 16 percent although the Dutch trade 76 percent of the world's bulbs. The tulip has been the most exported flower for many years, but the Netherlands also exports narcissi, hyacinth and gladioli bulbs. The major markets are Germany

(\$133 million) and the United States (\$122 million). Indicative of the importance of the U.S. market, the U.S. Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) has a bulb preclearance facility in the Netherlands completely supported by Dutch industry.

Live Plants

The Netherlands exported \$2.5 billion of live plants including indoor (\$744 million), outdoor (\$636 million), and trees, shrubs and bushes (\$290 million) in 2015, a decrease of 23 percent from the previous year. The market for plants is mostly other European member states.

Netherlands Exports of Live Plants (HS 0602) to the World

	2015 Million USD	2015 Market Share	Change 2015/2014
World	\$2,595.1		-23.41
Germany	\$727.7	28.05	-30.53
UK	\$297.7	11.48	-14.40
France	\$285.1	10.99	-24.57

Source: Global Trade Atlas®

Cut Flowers

The Netherlands exported \$3 billion of cut flowers in 2015, a 19 percent decrease from the previous year. Thirty percent of the cut flowers were roses. The Netherlands imported \$677 million of fresh cut roses, about 63 percent of which were from Kenya and Ethiopia. A considerable amount of these roses are sold through the Aalsmeer flower auction and then re-exported to other EU countries. In recent years, however, the Netherlands has faced increased competition from growers in Africa and elsewhere, mainly due to energy and labor costs. Many of the flowers grown in Africa are produced with direct Dutch investment.

Netherlands Exports of Cut Flowers (HS 0603) to the World

	2015 Million USD	2015 Market Share	Change 2015/2014
World	\$3,163.7		-18.68
Germany	\$857.1	27.09	-19.28
UK	\$507.9	16.06	-31.91
France	\$408.1	12.90	-14.53

Source: Global Trade Atlas®

Some flower traders believe that organic flowers are lower in quality as they don't look as nice nor do they last as long. As a result, organic flowers have not caught on in Europe yet.

Flower Auction System

The history of Dutch flower auctions goes back hundreds of years to now where they are the hub of the global flower trade and worldwide leaders in setting the price of plants and flowers. The auctions move over 60 percent of the world's trade in cut flowers and 40 percent of the trade in houseplants. Buyers arrive in the morning and with the push of a button they bid on dizzying array of plants and flowers. It used to be that all flowers sold at the auction were physically present, but this is not necessarily the case anymore. For the most part, buyers are looking at photos with information about the size, length and health of their flowers.

The Dutch Flower Auctions Association (Vereniging van Bloemenveilingen in Nederland, VBN) represents the Dutch auction houses; however, as a result of mergers, VBN currently has only two members, Royal FloraHolland and Plantion. With 36 auction clocks and four sites, Royal FloraHolland is the largest flower auction in the world. They have an annual turnover of around \$5 billion and 4,500 members of which approximately 700 are based abroad. Every day around \$55 million worth of flowers and plants are sold through this cooperative. Plantion, established in 2008, is also a cooperative owned by 275 Dutch growers of flowers and plants.

Foliage

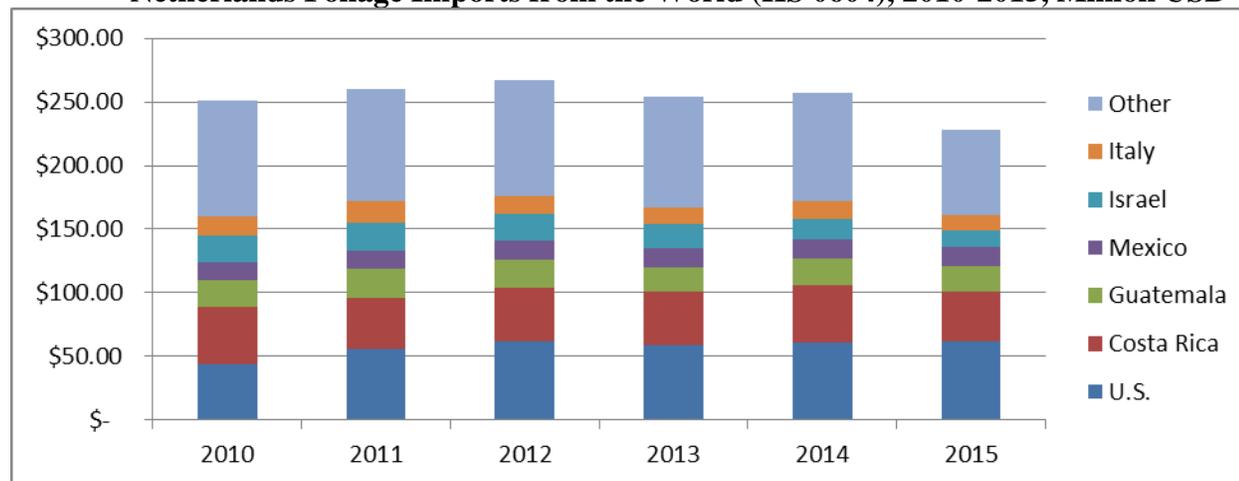
The Netherlands is a trade hub for foliage within Europe where all species of foliage are traded. In 2015, the Netherlands exported \$239 million of foliage for ornamental purposes, a decrease of three percent, mainly to Germany, France and the UK. The most important non-EU market is Russia.

Netherlands Exports of Foliage (HS 0604) to the World

	2015 Million USD	2015 Market Share	Change 2015/2014
World	\$238.7		-2.07
Germany	\$57.9	24.27	-0.93
UK	\$33.1	13.86	1.37
France	\$23.2	9.70	-11.77

Source: Global Trade Atlas®

Netherlands Foliage Imports from the World (HS 0604), 2010-2015, Million USD



Source:

Global Trade Atlas®

The Netherlands is the largest importer of cut foliage in Europe and imported \$229 million in 2015, a decrease of 11 percent. The decrease in foliage trade is due to the decline in demand for cut flower bouquets. The United States supplied 27 percent of Dutch foliage imports in 2015, valued at \$62 million. There are several specialized Dutch importers of foliage. A small amount of foliage is traded at the flower auction; however, mostly it is traded directly. U.S. suppliers can contact FAS/The Hague for a list of Dutch wholesale traders. The five main products traded are *Asparagus*, *Skimmia*, *Panicum*, *Quercus* and *Corylus*.

The market for organic foliage is very small and sellers to Europe must comply with EU legislation. Organic foliage must be produced and processed by natural methods. However, this may be an opportunity for U.S. suppliers in the future.

2. Chapter 07 Edible Vegetables & Certain Roots and Tubers

The Netherlands has a 14 percent market share in the world's vegetable trade, exporting \$7 billion in 2015, mostly to other EU markets such as Germany, the UK, and Belgium. In 2014, China surpassed the Netherlands as the largest exporter of vegetables. China, the Netherlands, Spain and Mexico account for over half of the world's vegetable production.

Eighty percent of what is produced in the Netherlands is exported of which approximately half ends up in the German market. However, German imports have been declining as the demand for local products grows. German retailers first look to see what is available from local sources. In the past, the Dutch suffered from a reputation of being a commodity producer producing products with little taste. They are competing with countries like Italy that have a reputation for quality and taste. Dutch producers conduct a great deal of research and development, and have made great strides in innovation regarding taste.

The most important vegetable crops grown and exported by the Dutch are onions, tomatoes, potatoes, and cucumbers. The United States is the 10th largest market by value for Dutch vegetables, mostly tomatoes and peppers.

Per capita consumption of vegetables has been declining, but the industry has been able to add value and are producing more ready-to-eat vegetables and packaging. The majority of vegetables grown in the Netherlands that are consumed domestically are consumed fresh. Although the value of turnover of fresh vegetables is growing by about five to ten percent per year, the actual volume amount is decreasing. This has to do with the increased trend in snacking: big tomatoes are being replaced with cherry or grape tomatoes, heads of lettuce are being replaced with cut lettuce in bags.

Russian Embargo

In August 2014, the Russian Federation banned certain agricultural products from countries that put in place sanctions against Russia in the context of the situation in Ukraine. In July 2015, this ban was extended for another year (until August 2016). This covered almost all fruit and vegetable products.

In 2013, the Netherlands exported \$115 million of vegetables to Russia. This has declined to \$42 million in 2015 and is likely to decline further this year as Russia tightens up loose ends. The effects of the Russian embargo are difficult to assess. The Netherlands has been able to move from one market to the next to fill gaps, such in Brazil and to open new markets such as in the Middle East, Africa and China, although it is getting harder to open new markets due food safety concerns in importing countries. For greenhouse products like tomatoes, peppers and cucumbers, the impact of the Russian ban was minimal because prices remained stable due to drought in 2015 in other countries.

Potatoes

The Netherlands is the largest exporter of fresh potatoes in the world, exporting \$600 million in 2015, a decrease of 23 percent from the previous year mostly due to a fall in German demand.

Netherlands Exports of Potatoes (HS 0701) to the World

	2015			
	2015, Tons	Market Share	Change 2015/2014	2015, Million USD
World	1,522,803		-13.32%	\$600.0
Belgium	210,256	13.81	-17.88%	\$54.4
Germany	155,628	10.22	-28.68	\$51.0
Algeria	130,918	8.60	-11.73	\$67.8

Source: Global Trade Atlas®

In 2014, the Netherlands grew 7 million tons of potatoes, 15 percent of all arable land was dedicated to potato production. Approximately 50 percent of domestic production is fresh or ware potatoes, 25 percent goes to the starch industry, and 25 percent for seed production.

Seed potatoes account for over two thirds of the total export value. The Netherlands is the largest producer of seed potatoes in the world and they supply sixty percent of the world market. The Netherlands exports about 800,000 tons of per year and this has been relatively stable for quite some time, although in 2015, exports reached a record 815,000 tons. The Dutch export to about 80 countries worldwide. Their largest market is Algeria as their climate is not suitable for growing seed potatoes, and the second largest market is Belgium to supply their French fry processing sector.

The Netherlands has two varieties potatoes that are protected through the EU geographical indications, the *Opperdoezer Ronde* and *De Meerlander*. For more information about EU and Netherlands ware potatoes, click on [EU-28 Potatoes and Potato Products Annual](#).

Tomatoes

The Netherlands is second largest exporter of fresh tomatoes in the world after Mexico. In 2015, the Netherlands exported \$1.7 billion, a decrease of 11 percent, mostly to other EU member states.

Netherlands Exports of Tomatoes (HS 0702) to the World

	2015			
	2015, Tons	Market Share	Change 2015/2014	2015, Million USD
World	1,010,883		-3.13%	\$1,676.0
Germany	424,418	41.98	-2.38	\$829.5
UK	168,931	16.71	-6.47	\$264.5
Italy	60,778	6.01	32.89	\$67.0

Source: Global Trade Atlas®

Tomatoes are the most commonly grown vegetables in Dutch greenhouses and its cultivation has steadily increased in recent years. Dutch tomato production takes place mostly in greenhouses and 85 percent are sold by grower associations. The Dutch grew 860 thousand tons of tomatoes in 2015 and is estimated to yield 900 million kg in 2016. In 2015, almost 90 percent of the crop was exported. The most important buyers were Germany and the UK. Exports of tomatoes have declined in recent years due to food safety issues.

Onions

In 2015, the Netherlands had a nine percent share in the world export market for onions. About 6 percent of arable Dutch agricultural land is used for the cultivation of Holland onions. Over the past 15 years this has increased by 50 percent resulting in over 74,000 acres. Some Asian countries, such as India and

Pakistan have a preference for Dutch onions as their water content is lower and they fry better than other varieties. Onions are the most heavily consumed vegetable around the world.

Netherlands Exports of Onions (HS 070310) to the World

	2015			
	2015, Tons	Market Share	Change 2015/2014	2015, Million USD
World	1,215,112		-6.67	\$426.1
Senegal	153,606	12.64	5.09	\$49.1
Brazil	135,360	11.14	750.22	\$34.8
UK	99,624	8.20	-25.25	\$40.0

Source: Global Trade Atlas®

Sweet Peppers

The Netherlands is the second largest exporter of sweet peppers after Spain. In 2015, the Netherlands exported \$932 million, a decrease of 8 percent. In 2015, the Dutch signed an agreement, one of the first countries to do so, to ship sweet peppers to China. The first trial shipment was sent in July 2016. These peppers also mark the first efforts to create a Dutch brand. The market is expected to permanently open in 2017 if all goes well with the trial shipment.

The United States is the third largest market for Dutch sweet peppers. In 2015, the Netherlands exported \$56 million of sweet potatoes to the United States.

Asparagus

The Netherlands is the fifth largest importer of fresh asparagus, almost all of which is re-exported. In 2015, the Netherlands imported \$66.9 million, mainly from Peru (83 percent), but a small amount also came from the United States (four percent). The Netherlands is the third largest exporter of fresh asparagus and in 2015, exported \$77.6 million, a 14.91 percent decrease from the previous year.

White asparagus grown in a southern Dutch region known as Brabantse Wal has been given official European Commission recognition as a protected regional product. The listing means only asparagus grown in the area using traditional methods can carry the label Brabantse Wal. The area around Bergen op Zoom was the center of Dutch asparagus growing until the 1950s. The amount of land used to cultivate asparagus in the Netherlands has gone up 60 percent since 2000.

Organic Production

Dutch production of organic greenhouse vegetables increases 15-20 percent annually. This is reflected in domestic consumption. The total consumption of organic products in the Netherlands passed the one billion euro threshold in 2013 and fresh organic vegetable consumption represents 68 percent. The Netherlands is a major producer of organic vegetables and a market leader in organically grown spinach, peas, beans, carrots and onions.

Dutch exports of organic products are estimated at \$1 billion annually. Carrots and tomatoes are among the top five organic products exported. Neighboring countries remain the most important market for Dutch exports of organic products, but exports to the United States have seen strong growth.

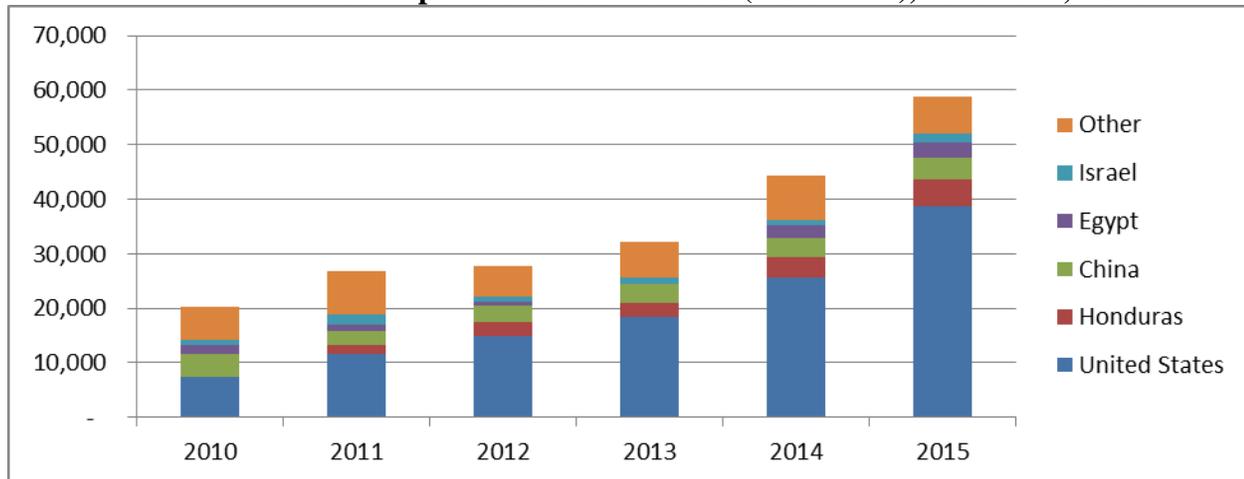
To make organic farms more competitive with regular agriculture, the government has signed a covenant with supermarkets, the Dutch Confederation of Agriculture and Horticulture (LTO) and other

parties for the joint promotion of organic products and a wider selection in the shops. It is anticipated that these efforts will lead to at least a 10 percent increase in organic product sales.

Sweet Potatoes

The Netherlands is a major transportation hub for sweet potatoes, in particular U.S. sweet potatoes. In 2015, the Netherlands imported \$58.9 million, a 13 percent increase from the previous year, more than half of which was re-exported (\$39.3 million) making the Netherlands, the second largest exporter of sweet potatoes after the United States.

Netherlands Imports of Sweet Potatoes (HS 071420), 2010-2015, Tons



Global Trade Atlas®

Source:

Sweet potatoes accounts for over half of total U.S. vegetable exports to the Netherlands. In 2015, the Netherlands imported 38,815 tons of sweet potatoes from the United States valued at \$39.5 million, an increase of 51 percent by volume from the previous year. The United States is the largest supplier of sweet potatoes to the Netherlands, supplying 67 percent of their total imports in 2015. Ninety nine percent of imported sweet potatoes are fresh and only one percent are frozen.

There is a growing interest by sweet potato suppliers to enter the Dutch market and not just from the United States. Dutch traders receive one or two calls a week particularly from Chinese suppliers interested in breaking into the market. The Dutch traders place a lot of value on building strong relationships with their suppliers and loyalty is important to them. In addition, there is a growing concern among many Dutch traders that there are too many importers of sweet potatoes; causing increased competition and lower prices.

Product is usually brought in through the port of Rotterdam or Antwerp. Traders import the product directly from a U.S. supplier and then put the pallets on trucks to sell to local retail outlets or other EU member states. Most of the importers are selling pallet size shipments. The trucks going to other MS do not have to be full. This is the beauty of shipping to the Netherlands first, logistical center.

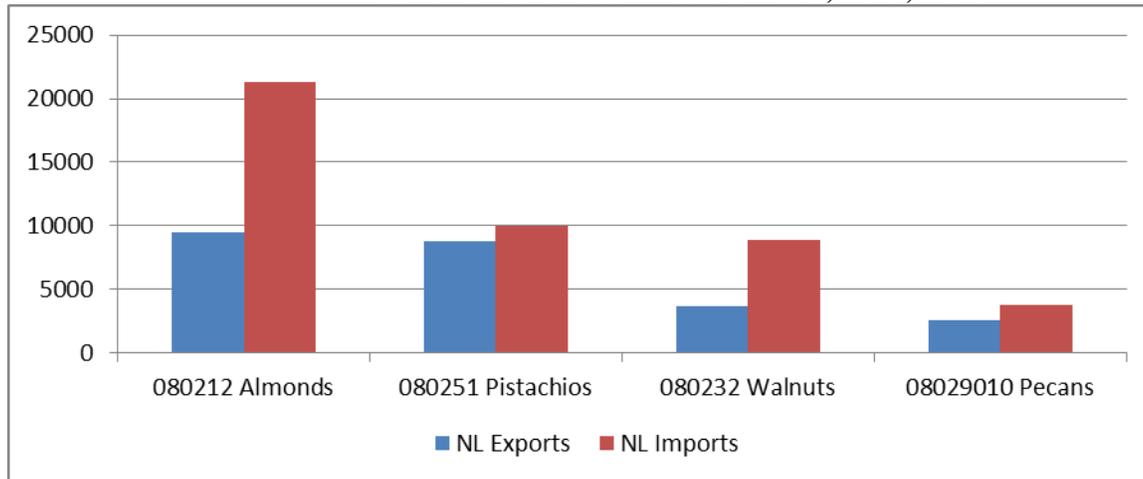
3. Chapter 08 Edible Fruits & Nuts; Citrus Fruit or Melon

The Netherlands imported \$6.6 billion and exported \$5.9 billion worth of fruits and nuts in 2015.

Nuts

The United States is a large supplier of tree nuts to the Netherlands. In 2015, the Netherlands imported \$582 million of nuts of which 55 percent were from the United States. The United States supplied 51 percent of all the almonds, 27 percent of all pistachios and 12 percent of all walnuts imported by the Netherlands.

Netherlands Global Trade of Nuts, 2015, Tons



Source: Global Trade Atlas®

For more information, see the [EU Tree Nuts Report](#).

Citrus

The Netherlands are one of the largest importers of citrus within the EU. In 2015, the Netherlands imported \$972 million of citrus fruit mainly oranges from South Africa (\$285 million) and mandarins from Spain (\$154 million). For more information, see the [EU Citrus Report](#).

Apples and Pears

The Netherlands imported \$236 million apples mainly from Chile and New Zealand, and \$149 million pears from South Africa and Chile. Also a major exporter, the Dutch exported \$188 million apples and \$335 million pears. The domestic production of apples declined by 7 percent in 2015 to 320,000 tons. Traditional Dutch apple varieties are *Elstar* and *Jonagold*; however, new varieties come into the market every year. The latest new varieties are *Kanzi* and *Junami*.

The domestic production of pears has increased substantially over the last 25 years, although it was down slightly last year from a record high to 317,190 tons. The variety grown in the Netherlands is called *Conference*. Most of the apples and pears entering the Netherlands are re-exported to other EU member states. For more information, see [EU Fresh Deciduous Fruit Report](#).

The Russian ban had a dramatic impact on pear growers. An EU intervention program purchased pears to help make up for the loss, but not enough for prices to rebound. As a result, Dutch pear growers have suffered in the past two years from the ban. The Dutch pear export industry has spent a lot of resources to promote domestic consumption and open new new markets in China and the United States. In 2014, after five years of bilateral consultations and negotiations, the Dutch *Conference* pear finally received

market access to the Chinese market. There were more than 1 million kg of Dutch *Conference* pears exported to China during the first season. Currently, the United States is reviewing applications from eight EU member states to export apples and pears including the Netherlands.

Section II. Key Contacts and Further Information

U.S. Embassy

FAS/The Hague

Marcel H. Pinckaers

Lange Voorhout 102, 2514 EJ The Hague, The Netherlands

Phone: +31 (0)70-310.2305

E-mail: pinckaersm@state.gov

Website: <http://thehague.usembassy.gov/fas.html> or www.fas.usda.gov