



Agriculture and Agribusiness

A Top Export Prospect for Belize

September 2014

Overview

- Agriculture has remained one of Belize’s leading primary industries in the cultivation of traditional and non-traditional crops. Crops arranged in order of contribution to GDP are citrus, banana, sugar, papaya, red kidney beans, and black eye peas. Almost all corn grown in Belize is consumed domestically, and as a result only in some instances are excess stock exported.
- According to data from the Statistical Institute of Belize, contribution to GDP between 2007 to 2011 for Agriculture is provided in the table below:

Year	Total National Exports (USDS Millions)	Value of Agricultural Exports	Percent of Total Exports
2007	174.5	133.0	76.2%
2008	295.3	127.0	43.0%
2009	246.4	127.8	51.8%
2010	284.7	127.1	44.6%
2011	345.7	139.0	40.2%
2012	389.3	232.4	59.7%
2013	338.8	236.3	69.7%

- Agriculture and agribusiness are an integral part of Belize’s economy as it provides sources of income and livelihoods for large numbers of workers. It also contributes to the overall food security of the country as locally grown fruit and vegetables are consumed domestically.
- Agriculture and agribusiness have thrived in Belize due to adequate rainfall and a relatively stable year-round sub-tropical climate. Planting and harvesting are mostly seasonal, except for a few crops that grow year-round such as papaya. Banana, citrus, and sugar are the larger industries that economically dominate this sector.
- The planting and harvesting of habanero has found its place in the preparation of locally made and world-renowned hot pepper sauces.

- There has also been considerable advancement in local exotic fruits being converted and processed into jams, jellies, extracts, and pastes. This sub-sector reduces the level of spoilage that would otherwise occur by utilizing produce that was not sold at the market.

Sub-Sector Best Prospects

- Farms in Belize generally lack irrigation systems or modern agricultural equipment, as a result efficiency and yield per acre can improve significantly if these were available. Some groups are moving toward more efficient farming methods. As this grows, there may be improvements all around the country in this sector and necessary improvements to infrastructure to cope with higher production and export.
- Belize's soils and stable climate hold the potential to create commercial cultivation of organic produce. Currently, only a few specialized small farmers grow organic produce. The cacao grown in southern Belize is certified organic. The main cacao and sugar growers associations are certified as Fair Trade by an international organization.
- Belize has not yet diversified or explored the potential benefits to be gained from biotechnology to maximize the output of crops. Genetically modified produce has not been introduced to the local market and there is no relevant regulatory system in place.
- Belize also needs a modern laboratory to test and validate the nutritional contents of processed food stuffs, fruits, vegetables, sauces, and other by-products for product labels. Currently, producers in Belize must send their products to other countries in the Caribbean or in Central America to be tested for nutritional value and contents. This process drives up the cost of bringing products to market and limits the number of producers that can afford such services.

Opportunities

- Exports of sawn wood, veneer, grains, jams and jellies, and pepper sauces have been increasing their contribution to Belize's agro-productive sector performance.
- A bottling, packaging, and canning facility is also needed to service small and medium size producers of fresh agricultural produce and processed agricultural products.
- Belize's agricultural sector depends largely on imported packaging, which is often costly to source within Central America.
- Belize also requires proper cold storage facilities to be installed at ports, in order to facilitate the trade in fresh or processed agricultural products.
- Investors in this sector can apply for incentives under the Fiscal Incentives Program or Export Processing Zone Program. Information on investment incentives can be found at www.belizeinvest.org.bz.

Web Resources

- Belize Ministry of Agriculture
<http://www.agriculture.gov.bz/>
- Belize Agricultural Health Authority
<http://www.baha.bz/>
- Belize Bureau of Standards
<http://www.bbs.gov.bz/>
- Belize Ministry of Natural Resources
<http://www.mnrei.gov.bz/>
- Belize Weather Bureau
<http://www.hydromet.gov.bz/>
- Belize Pesticides Control Board
<http://www.pcbbelize.com/pesticides.html>
- Statistical Institute of Belize
<http://www.statistics.org.bz>
- Belize Trade and Investment Development Service
<http://www.belizeinvest.org.bz>

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