

Product Focus

Fresh Strawberries - 081010



The common strawberry is known as the garden strawberry, a hybrid species of the genus *Fragaria* (*Fragaria × ananassa*). In the northern hemisphere, a wild variety grows naturally, known as wild or woodland strawberry (*Fragaria vesca*).

Strawberries are red, heart-shaped, and studded with small seeds, strawberries are one of the most popular fruits in the world. Strawberries are actually a group of fruits (genus *Fragaria*) containing several varieties and are part of the rose family. The typically red fruit has an early summer harvest, with the actual growing season depending on the variety and location.

OPPORTUNITIES

The global import of fresh strawberries increased by 27% in the period 2015 to 2018 from US\$ 2.4 billion to US\$3.1 billion. The table below highlights major importers regionally and internationally in 2019.

International Markets		Regional Markets	
✓ United States of America	✓ Belgium	✓ South Africa	✓ Côte d'Ivoire
✓ Canada	✓ Italy	✓ Mauritius	✓ Seychelles
✓ Germany	✓ Russian Federation	✓ Libya, State of	✓ Ghana
✓ United Kingdom	✓ Austria	✓ Sudan	✓ Eswatini
✓ France	✓ Hong Kong, China	✓ Botswana	
✓ Netherlands	✓ Saudi Arabia	✓ Namibia	
	✓ Spain		

Source: ITC Trademap and ExportPotentialMap

USA, Canada and Germany are the leading importing countries of fresh strawberries.

MARKET ANALYSIS

According to UN COMTRADE - Trademap statistics, COMESA's exports of fresh strawberries to the world increased by 22% over the past five years, from US\$75 million in 2015 to US\$91 million in 2019. The major export markets for COMESA include, Belgium, Germany, Saudi Arabia, Russia, United Kingdom, UAE, Netherlands, Iraq and South Africa, among others.

EXPORT POTENTIAL

In recent years, the COMESA countries which have been producing and exporting fresh strawberries include:

Country	Potential & Existing Export Markets
1. Egypt	Belgium, Germany, Saudi Arabia, Russia, United Kingdom, United Arab Emirates, Netherlands, Iraq, South Africa, Oman, Ireland, France, Kuwait, Malaysia, Libya, Bahrain, Syria, Sudan, Luxembourg, Hong Kong, Singapore, Denmark, China, Jordan, Poland, Turkey.
2. Ethiopia	Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, South Africa, Nigeria, Netherlands, United Kingdom, Qatar, Bahrain, Seychelles, Singapore, Gabon, Ireland, Russia.
3. Zimbabwe	South Africa, Bahrain, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Singapore, United Kingdom, Malaysia, Czech Republic, Saudi Arabia, Zambia.
4. Tunisia	United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Sudan, Bahrain, Italy, Côte d'Ivoire, Kuwait, Libya, United Kingdom, United States of America.
5. Kenya	United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain, Russia, Kuwait, France, Hong Kong, Netherlands, Norway, Senegal, Thailand, Belarus, Oman, Rwanda, Uganda

Source: ITC Trademap and ExportPotentialMap

MARKET ENTRY

Certification and the need to fulfil both legal and non-legal requirements pose major obstacles to producers and exporters entering the market. As an exporter you depend a lot on the quality control of your buyer.

Flavour

Flavour is becoming increasingly important to consumers, as is the appearance of the fruit. Consumers are prepared to pay a premium for high-quality, tasty strawberries.

When exporting strawberries, it is important to pay attention to quality and taste and understand how consumers experience the product. By supplying superior-tasting strawberries, you will motivate consumers to continue purchasing your product.

Size Requirements

In the marketing standard for strawberries, size is determined by the maximum diameter of the equatorial section. The minimum size should be:

25 mm for 'Extra' Class 1; 18 mm for Classes I and II. There is no minimum size for wood strawberries (or wild strawberries).

Sweetness

Additionally, to the marketing standards, buyers will not accept strawberries with a sugar level lower than 8 brix. The most ideal brix level is between 12 and 16, but regular varieties with a brix of 10-13 are very common.

PACKAGING

The most common packaging for strawberries are punnets between 250 g and 500 g. Discuss the preferred packaging with your clients. The strawberries must be packed in such a way as to protect the produce properly. The materials used inside the package must be clean and of a quality such as to avoid causing any external or internal damage to the produce. The use of materials, particularly of paper or stamps bearing trade specifications, is allowed, provided the printing or labelling has been done with non-toxic ink or glue. Packages must be free of all foreign matter.

Labelling

The label or marking of each box should at least give the following information:

- ✓ name and physical address of the packer and/or dispatcher (which can be replaced by an officially recognised code mark);
- ✓ name of the product (if not visible from the outside) and the commercial type;
- ✓ country of origin;
- ✓ commercial identification: class, size in minimum and maximum weight or diameter and, optionally, number of units;
- ✓ officially recognised code mark or traceability code (for example Global Location Number (GLN) or GLOBALG.A.P. Number (GGN) (recommended).

In addition, the label should include a certification logo (if applicable) and/or retailer logo (in the case of private label products).

Quality Standards

Fresh strawberries must be:

- ✓ intact, undamaged;
- ✓ sound – produce affected by rotting or deterioration such as to make it unfit for consumption is excluded;
- ✓ clean, practically free of any visible foreign matter; fresh in appearance, but not washed;
- ✓ practically free from pests;
- ✓ practically free from damage caused by pests;
- ✓ including the calyx (except in the case of wood strawberries) – the calyx and the stalk (if present) must be fresh and green;
- ✓ free of abnormal external moisture;
- ✓ free of any foreign smell and/or taste.

Most consumers almost exclusively demand 'Extra' Class or Class I strawberries, which means they have to be of good or superior quality with only a small margin permitted for defects in shape, pressure marks and white patches.

PHYTOSANITARY REQUIREMENTS

Roots, fruits and vegetables to be exported to various markets must comply with the legislation on plant health.

Most destination markets require fresh strawberries to go through plant health checks before entering or moving within their countries for example EU, USA and Asia.

Exporters are encouraged to consult with their Agriculture Ministries to be issued a relevant certificate/permit.

STANDARDS

Since food safety is a top priority in food sectors, you can expect most buyers to request extra guarantees from you in terms of certification.

The most commonly requested certification for strawberries include;

- a) **GLOBAL G.A.P. Crops (*Global Good Agricultural Practice*)**: The standard is primarily designed to reassure consumers about how food is produced on the farm by minimising detrimental environmental impacts of farming operations, reducing the use of chemical inputs and ensuring a responsible approach to worker health and safety as well as animal welfare.
- b) **BRC (*British Retail Consortium*)**: BRCGS' Standards guarantee the standardisation of quality, safety and operational criteria and ensure that manufacturers fulfil their legal obligations and provide protection for the end consumer. Certification to BRCGS' Standards is now often a fundamental requirement of leading retailers, manufacturers and food service organisations.
- c) **IFS (*International Food Standard*)**: The IFS comprise eight different food and non-food standards, covering the processes along the supply chain. However, IFS does not specify what these processes must look like but merely provides a risk-based assessment of them. The different standards are now used by manufacturers and retailers worldwide to meet new requirements for quality, transparency and efficiency resulting from globalisation.

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