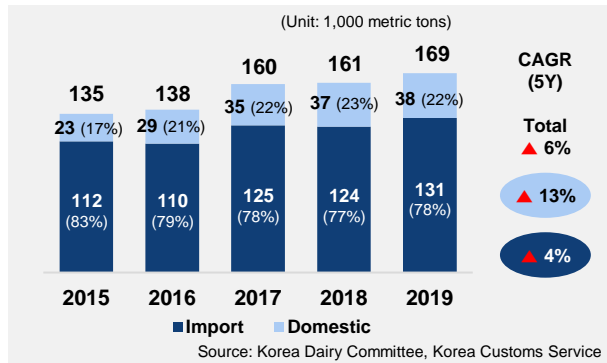


Korea Market Brief

Cheese

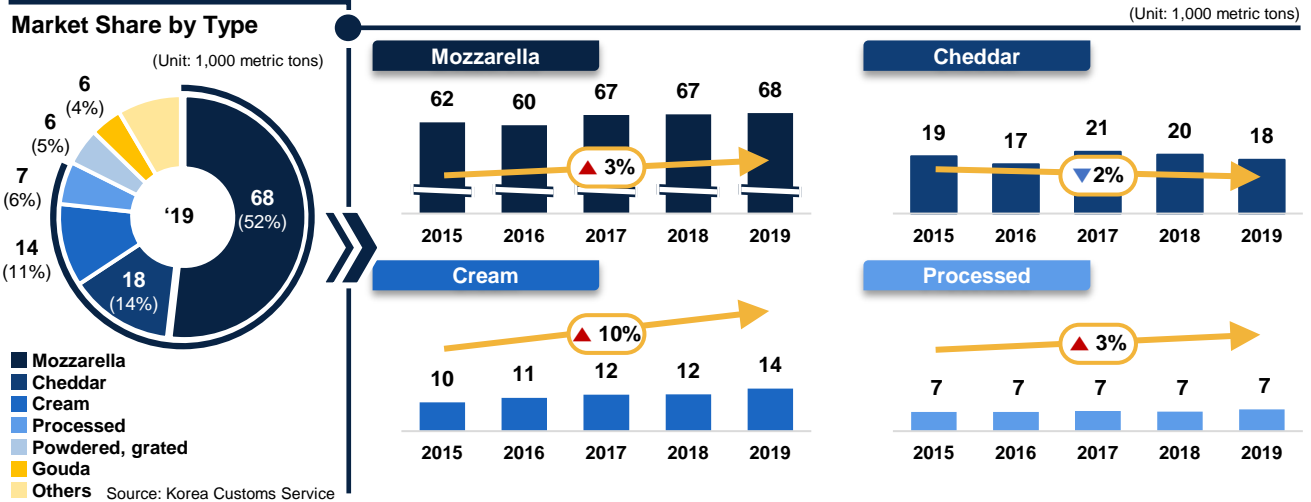


The cheese market is expected to continue to grow as cheese becomes increasingly integrated in Korea's dietary culture.

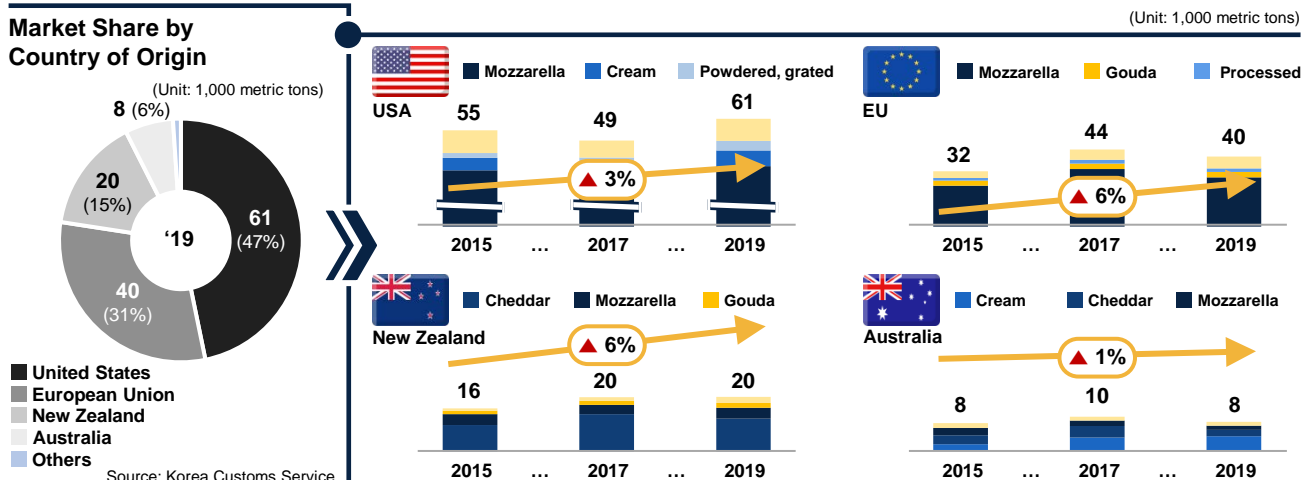


- Imported cheese accounts for almost 80 percent of Korea's cheese market. Cheese imports have more than tripled since 2000.
- Despite domestic producers' consistent effort to expand market share, domestic cheese is struggling as it lacks price competitiveness.

Mozzarella is by far the most imported cheese as it is widely used as an ingredient in the foodservice and food processing sector.



The United States remains the market leader with a 47% import market share, followed by the European Union and New Zealand.



Consumer Trends

There is growing demand for cheese as an ingredient and as a snack in Korea. Cheese is increasingly being integrated into Korean dishes in addition to Western cuisine.

Expansion of Cheese as a Food Ingredient

Cheese as a food ingredient was previously limited to meals like pizza, hamburgers, and pasta served at fast-food and Western-style restaurants. Cheese can now be commonly found in Korean cuisine, such as Teokbokki and Ramen. Cheese is also increasingly used in the food processing industry, especially as an ingredient in Home Meal Replacement (HMR) products. As an example, Pulmuone, one of the leading food processors, recently launched 'Mozzarella Cheese Ball' and 'Red Bean Cream Cheese Ball.' HMR products with cheese ingredients have become more popular with the widespread use of air fryers, as they are easy to cook and the taste and texture of cheese improves when cooked with air fryers. Food processors prefer to use imported cheese (mostly from the United States and New Zealand), as it is more price competitive than domestic cheese.

Increasing Consumption of Cheese as a Snack

Cheese is a popular snack in Korea, especially for children, because parents see it as an excellent source of protein and calcium. Food processors are launching a wide range of cheese snack products aimed at health conscious parents, such as cheese with added vegetables and additive-free and sugar-free cheese. The products come in various formats, such as string cheese or cheese cubes, and in small convenient packages. The snack cheese market was valued at \$51.3 million in 2019, up more than 20% from 2018. In the past, cheese used to only be considered as a snack for kids. Adults now commonly consume cheese as a healthy snack, as a snack to pair with alcoholic drinks, and as a salad topping.

Growing Online Sales of Cheese

Online grocery retail has grown significantly throughout Korea, especially in Seoul and surrounding metropolitan areas with high population densities. More consumers are enjoying the ease of refrigerated and frozen products with same-day delivery options. This trend also boosts cheese consumption as consumers enjoy the convenience of door-to-door delivery of fresh dairy products within hours. Additionally, the recent introduction of online specialty cheese retailers allows Korean consumers to conveniently purchase a diverse range of cheese, including premium artisanal cheese.

Regulatory Overview

****Disclaimer:** This overview is not a comprehensive guide, and regulations can frequently change. Exporters should verify requirements with their importers before goods are shipped.



Tariffs & Taxes

Korea continues to apply import duties on U.S. cheese. Duties on cheese products will decrease to 0% in 2026. Curd, blue-veined, and cheddar cheese import duties will be 0% in 2021. Please refer to the [Agricultural Tariff Tracker](#) for details.

Cheese	HS code	2020	2021	2022	2023
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mozzarella, Cream, Other Fresh Cheese, Grated or Powdered Cheese, Processed Cheese, Gouda, Camembert, Emmental, Other 	04061010, 0406200000, 0406300000, 0406902000, 0406903000, 0406904000, 0406909000	14.4%	12.0%	9.6%	7.2%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Curd, Blue-Veined Cheese 	0406102000, 0406400000	3.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cheddar Cheese 	0406901000	3.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

Source: <https://apps.fas.usda.gov/agtarriftracker/Home/Search>

A Pre-Registration and Required Certification for Import to Korea

Product Registration	Livestock Plant Registration	Certificate of Origin	Export Certificate
No product registration is required to import U.S. Cheese into Korea.	Livestock plants, including dairy and egg plants, should be registered with MFDS through FAS/Seoul. US dairy plants are required to submit application documents to FAS/Seoul via email.	The certificate of origin must be prepared for origin verification. Documentation must be kept for five years.	Dairy products must be accompanied with an export certificate or a self declaration that specifies heat treatment conditions.

For details, please refer to [FAIRS Country Report](#), [FAIRS Export Certificate Report](#)

B Labeling Requirements

All imported U.S. products are required to carry legible Korean language labels. Label stickers or tags may be placed upon arrival in Korea. Labels should not be easily removed or cover the original label such as product name or expiration date.

Korean Language Labeling	Consideration for Labeling
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Product Name & Product type Country of origin Ingredient names and content Manufacture date 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additives Nutrients Allergens

C Import Inspection

Laboratory Test	Document Review	Random Sampling Test
All newly imported products undergo laboratory tests.	Subsequent shipments of the same product that passed the first lab test will be reviewed.	Samples are selected randomly depending on violation history or market intelligence.

For details, please refer to [FAIRS Country Report](#), [FAIRS Export Certificate Report](#)



Regulatory Overview

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Korean Food Safety & Additive Standards

For Korean food safety and additive standards, please refer to the following links.

[Food Additive Code](#)

[Food Ingredient Database](#)

Frequently Asked Questions

FAQ #1: Is labeling the 100% ingredient breakdown required for import?

The Korean government does not require 100% ingredient composition breakdown information on the import application for imported processed food products entering Korea. What is required is the percentage breakdown of major ingredients and the percentage of food additives in the product in case Korea has tolerances established on the additives. For food additives used in composite ingredients, the supplier may need to submit detailed information to verify if the product meets the Korean food additive standards.

FAQ #2: Are there any requirements on exporters when making a Certification of Origin?

Yes, if you are qualified for the FTA. Article 6.17.1 of KORUS FTA requires specific records to be kept for a minimum of five years if a certification from a producer or exporter forms the basis of a claim. We encourage you to look at these provisions. There are also obligations of exporters provided under Article 6.20. Questions about these provisions can be e-mailed to KORUS@ustr.eop.gov or at fta@dhs.gov.

FAQ #3: Are there any documents required for Halal, GMP, or vegan products?

Yes. In order to apply a mark or claim to packaging, exporters and importers should keep supporting documents for their marketing claims. MFDS does not check supporting documents when products arrive in Korea but MFDS has a right to request supporting documents if necessary. Supporting documents should be issued by reliable and credible organizations.

FAQ #4: What are the roles and responsibilities of importers?

Korean importers are responsible for claiming preferential treatment for qualifying goods. However, the exporter or producer may be asked by the importer, customs broker, or the Korean Customs Service to provide a written or electronic certification or other information to support the importer's claim. The information required for certification can be found in Article 6.15.2 of the KORUS FTA, but additional elements may be required by the Korean Customs Service. You should contact your importer or customs broker to confirm what information is required.

USDA GAIN Report Link

[Facility Registration](#)
[MRL](#)
[Exporter Guide](#)

FAIRS Reports

[FAIRS Country Report](#)
[FAIRS Export Certificate Report](#)

ATO Seoul - Regulation

[ATO Seoul Regulation](#)

