

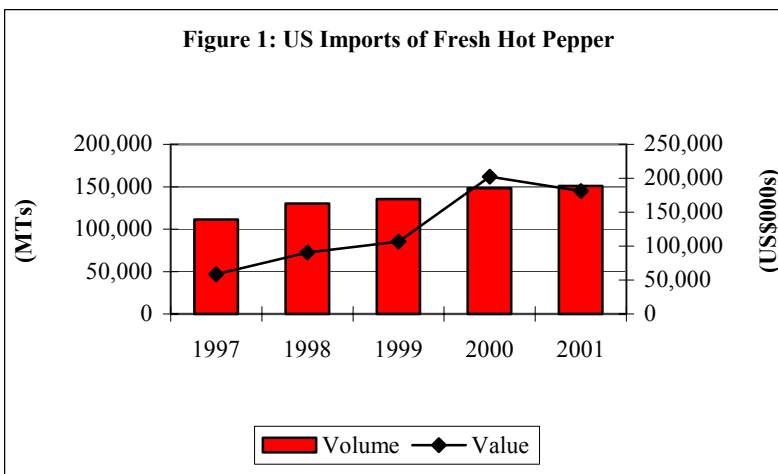
Scotch Bonnet Peppers



HILLSIDE AGRICULTURAL PROGRAM
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Native to Jamaica, other Caribbean islands, and Belize, the Scotch Bonnet pepper is related to the Habanero and is the most popular of the Caribbean varieties. It is also referred to as Bahamian, Bahama Mama, Jamaican Hot, or Martinique Pepper.

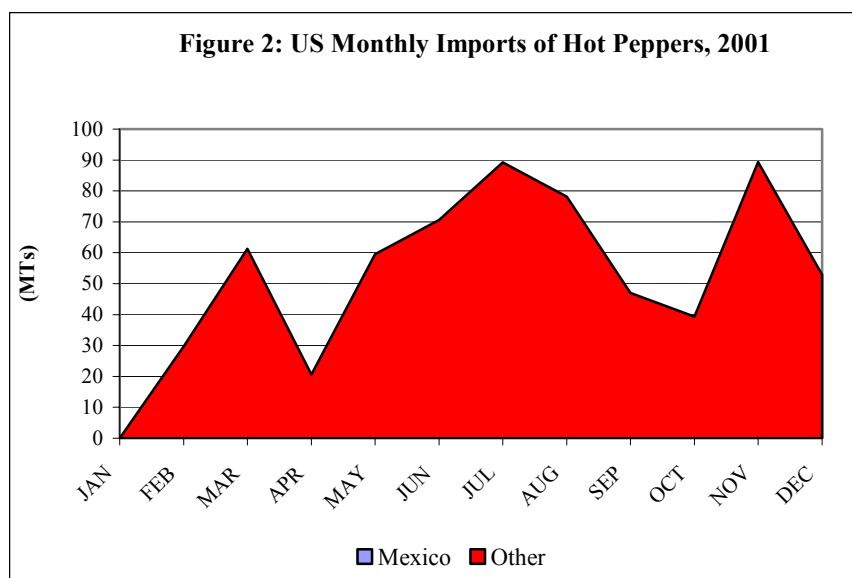
Imports: While official US import statistics do not break down imports of hot peppers by variety, total US imports of fresh hot peppers have shown consistent growth in recent years. In 2001, imports totaled over 150,000 MTs valued at \$181 million, a slight decrease over 2000 figures. It should be noted that nearly 99 percent of the 2001 imports came from Mexico. Several other suppliers, including the Dominican Republic and Jamaica, vied for the remaining market share.



Source: US ITC

Seasonality and Market Share:

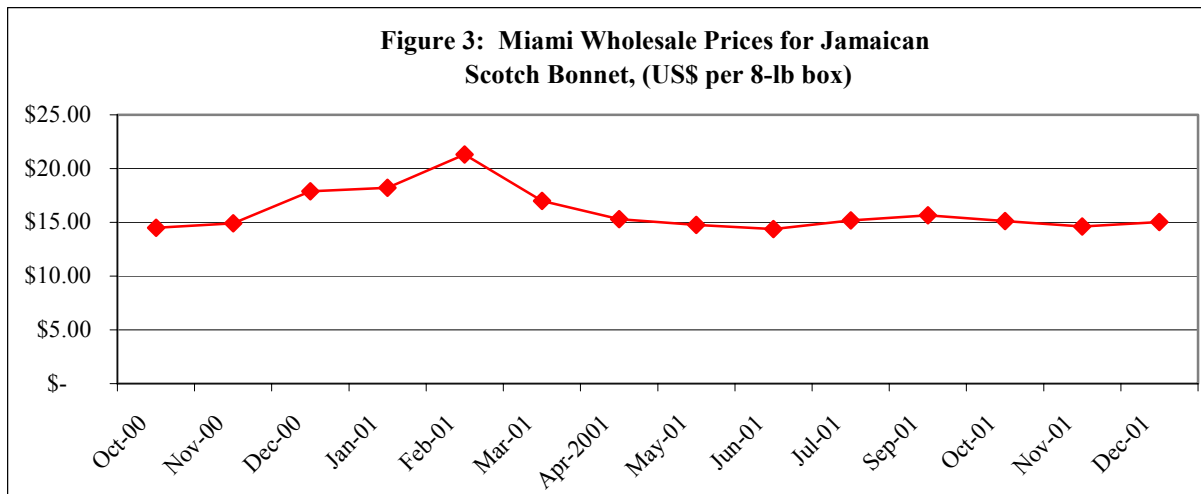
Mexico is the top supplier of fresh hot peppers to the United States. Other suppliers include Honduras, Belize, the Dominican Republic, Trinidad and Jamaica. Mexico exports fresh hot peppers year round, with the primary season stretching from July to November, with a slight dip in October. Import volumes totaled 150,267 MTs in 2001, jumping to a peak of 16,949 MTs in August. Imports from other suppliers reach their maximum of 89 MTs during the month of July.



Source: USITC

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Source: USDA/MNS

Prices: Wholesale prices for Jamaican scotch bonnet peppers are consistent throughout the year, occasionally varying a few dollars per box. Prices during the last 12 months ranged between \$14 and \$16 per 8-lb box. The highest price for Jamaican hot pepper was \$21.00 during the month of February.

Quality Standards: Scotch bonnet peppers come in a variety of colors and sizes. All peppers should be clean, dry, and free of blemishes, cracks, and discolorations prior to packing. Uneven maturity, color, and sizes should also be removed. The stalk should be intact, fresh, and green with no blackening. Large peppers are preferred over small ones – individual specimens should measure a minimum of one inch in diameter and weigh no less than 5 grams. Grading should be carried out in field packing stations or in a packhouse in order to satisfy the minimum hygiene requirements.



Postharvest Handling and Storage: Peppers should not be washed, as water on the surface will accelerate deterioration; soil-splashed peppers are wiped with a clean cloth dipped in potable water containing a cleaning solution. The peppers must be allowed to dry before packing. Peppers break down soon after harvest, and shipment within 24 hours is preferred. Even with a cold storage of 8-12° C, the highest quality product should not sit for longer than 48 hours after harvest. For the same reason, hot peppers are always shipped by air.

Packaging: Peppers can be packed in either half- or full-telescopic fiberboard cartons. If full boxes are used, a central divider should be inserted. The net weight of hot pepper containers varies, but a standard size for the scotch bonnet is 8 pounds. Open or ventilated boxes are preferred to closed ones because the latter cause gas to build up, temperature to rise, and condensation to form, which hastens deterioration.