

D. CHEESE PRODUCTION

Cheese Production Overview

Continuing a long-term upward trend, the total production of cheese in the United States reached a record high of 9.7 billion pounds in 2007, an increase of 1.8% over 2006. In fact, production growth occurred in all three major categories of cheese produced in the United States: American type, Italian type and “other natural cheeses.”

U.S. production of Italian-style cheeses grew more than 4% to 4.1 billion pounds. Mozzarella, which represents nearly 80% of this category, also showed a 5% growth in production.

Production of American-type cheese showed a slight decrease of 0.9% over 2006. The production of cheddar cheese decreased by about 2.1% in 2007.

Given that there are more than 300 varieties of cheese sold in the United States, most varieties fall into the “other cheeses” category, meaning that they are neither Italian nor American types. Overall, this category continued its steady growth in 2007, increasing by 3% and reaching a new high of almost 1.7 billion pounds. Individual varieties also exhibiting steady growth included Muenster (up 8%) and Hispanic-style cheeses (up almost 5%).

Two states dominate U.S. cheese production: Wisconsin and California. In 2007, Wisconsin remained the largest cheese-producing state with its production of almost 2.5 billion pounds, representing 25% of the U.S. total, but California continued to close the distance, producing more than 2.2 billion pounds of cheese in 2007. Adding in Idaho, New York and Minnesota, the top five cheese producing states accounted for 71% of all U.S. cheese production in 2007.

Data from the most recent Census of Manufacturing in 2002 show that the total wholesale value of cheese and cheese products manufactured in the United States was \$22 billion. That year, the cheese manufacturing industry employed 37,700 people with a total payroll of \$1.65 billion. There were 501 plants reporting cheese manufacturing activities in 2002.