

## CONSUMER TASTES

There are a number of factors leading to a rising demand for imported food products, including: a total population forecast by OECD to increase to 100 million by the year 2000; increased urbanisation and a growing number of affluent and middle income consumers; and a rise in Mexican purchasing power.

Food is expensive in relation to income: the average Mexican family spends 35% of its income on food. This percentage drops considerably for upper and upper-middle income consumers, who spend far less of their income on food but easily account for the greatest proportion of food purchasing in Mexico. Lower-income Mexicans in rural areas often grow their own produce and buy other items at the local market or in government stores.

Wealthy consumers frequently shop for food at the country's major supermarkets, import stores and other small establishments. They look for grocery stores with good location, competitive prices, brand names, good reputation and service. The buyer of imported foods is usually the female head of the household.

Many new developments are leading to change in Mexico: education is widely available; more women are pursuing careers; and more and more Mexican kitchens are being modernised with refrigerators, freezers and microwave ovens.

Consumer focus groups in Mexico City reveal an interesting distinction in food purchase behaviour and profiles between the 25-35 and the 35-45 age groups. Female consumers in the 25-35 age group generally represent a good market for variety and high-quality, convenience foods such as prepared entrées, microwavable meals, desserts, cereals, cookies and pasta. These younger women have broken with tradition, most are university-educated, have (or had) careers, and are often married with infants or young children at home. They rarely prepare entire meals from scratch because of time pressures, a lack of training in the kitchen and a perceived lack of recognition for their efforts.

Younger couples enjoy fine dining about once a week. Families with young children sometimes choose the convenience of fast-food chains, a recent development in Mexico.

Most female consumers in the 35-45 age group tend to use imports only occasionally; they look for unique and prestigious food products (appetizers, seafood, drinks) for use at family and social events. These consumers are a good target for in-store promotions and demonstrations as they often seek freshness and personalized service. Typically, they eat at home and dine in restaurants once or twice a month, usually on special occasions.

Both age groups prefer the convenience of one-stop shopping at supermarkets and/or hypermarkets (large supermarkets carrying a variety of goods). Both groups also prefer imported foods to be mixed in with domestic products on the store shelves in order to compare quality, price and appearance.

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- Agri-Food Trade with Mexico, pg 2
- EMAR, pg 16