



BRIEFING

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Lentils: Production, Uses, and Exports Kevin McNew and Sam Bixley

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Production:

India and Canada are the world's largest producer of lentils and combined to produce 57 percent of production in 2000 (Figure 1). World lentil production generally increased throughout the 1990s (Figure 2). During the same period, U.S. lentil production nearly doubled (Figure 3). Nonetheless, U.S. production represents only 5 percent of world production.

It does not do well in waterlogged soils, and optimal growing season moisture is between 10 to 12 inches. Lentils can be grown in various soils ranging from sand to clay loam, but performs best in sandy loam soils with good internal drainage, high phosphorus and potassium, and a pH near 7. It is a good rotation crop because, as a legume, it provides a large amount of fixed nitrogen; some varieties return as much as 20 lbs/acre.

Production Practices:

Lentils are well adapted to cool, semi-arid growing conditions, with young plants extremely tolerant to frost which allows for early planting dates.

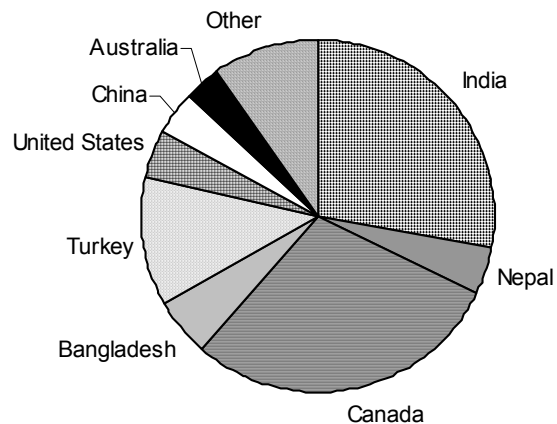
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Objective
Analysis
for Informed
Decision Making

Figure 1: Lentil Production by Country: 2000



World Total: 3 Million Metric Tons

Figure 2: World Lentil Production: 1991-2000

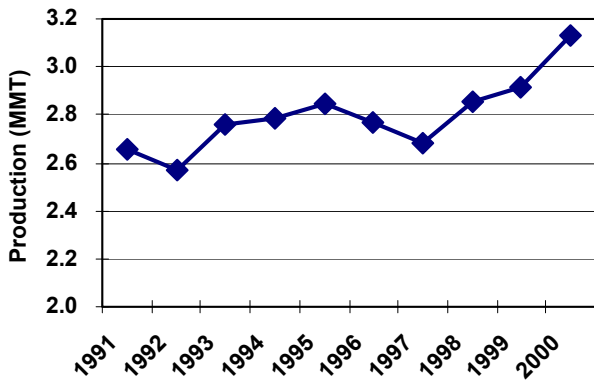
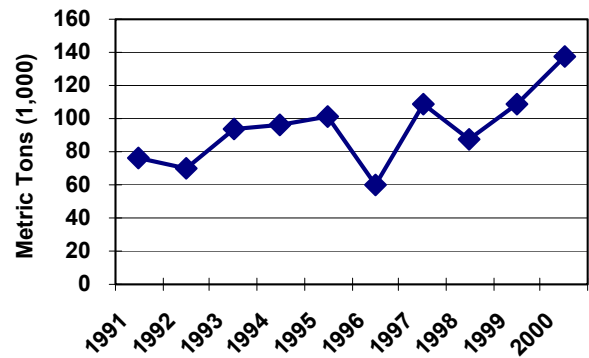


Figure 3: U.S. Lentil Production: 1991-2000



Consumption:

Lentils are used in Indian and Middle Eastern food cuisine and in soups and stews. While lentils are high in protein -- ranging from 22 percent to 35 percent -- they are low in nutritional value because they lack essential amino acids. Husks, dried leaves, stems, and residues are often fed to livestock, and are a good source of calories as they are high in fiber and carbohydrates. Lentil seeds are also used as a source of starch for commercial printing and textiles.

Imports and Exports:

Imports are spread across numerous countries, primarily developing nations, with Egypt, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka being the largest importers, consuming 12 percent, 10 percent, and 9 percent of total imports respectively (Table 1).

Table 1: World Lentil Imports, 2000

Lentil Imports	Metric Tons	Share of World
Egypt	50,274	12.10%
Bangladesh	40,000	9.63%
Sri Lanka	37,253	8.97%
United States	4,623	1.11%
World	415,419	100.00%

Canada is the largest exporter totaling 47 percent of the world's lentil exports (Table 2). The United States plays a minor role capturing only 4 percent of total production, 9 percent of total exports, and 1 percent of all imports.

Table 2: World Lentil Exports, 2000

Lentil Exports	Metric Tons	Share of World
Canada	161,795	46.63%
Turkey	56,839	16.38%
India	36,000	10.37%
United States	29,889	8.61%
World	346,992	100.00%

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