



BRIEFING

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

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Production:

Flax is an oilseed crop that is primarily used to make linseed oil. Historically, linseed oil has been used as a drying agent for paints, varnishes, printing ink, and lacquer. More recently, linseed oil has been replaced commercially by synthetics such as latex. Currently, linseed oil is marketed as a healthy vegetable oil and it also finds limited use as a concrete treatment.

The United States produced a record of 10.7 million bushels in 2000 (Figure 3). Nonetheless, the U.S. is only the fifth largest world producer (Figure 1).

Canada is the largest producer of flaxseed, producing nearly 30 percent of the world's total production in 2000 (Figure 1). World flaxseed production has averaged approximately 2.5 mmt throughout the 1990's (Figure 2).

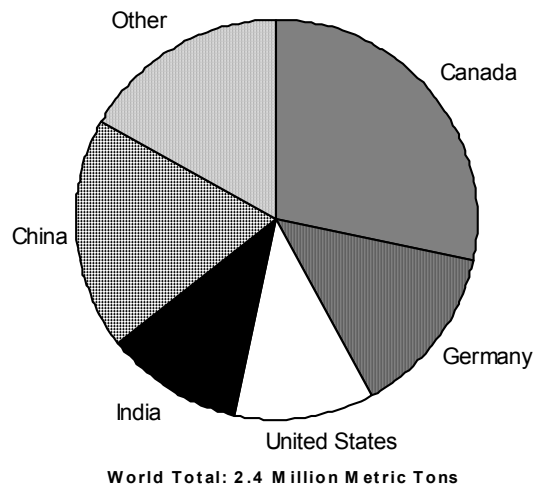
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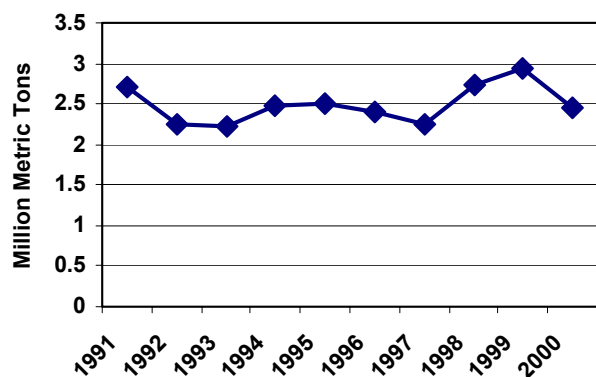
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Objective
Analysis
for Informed
Decision Making

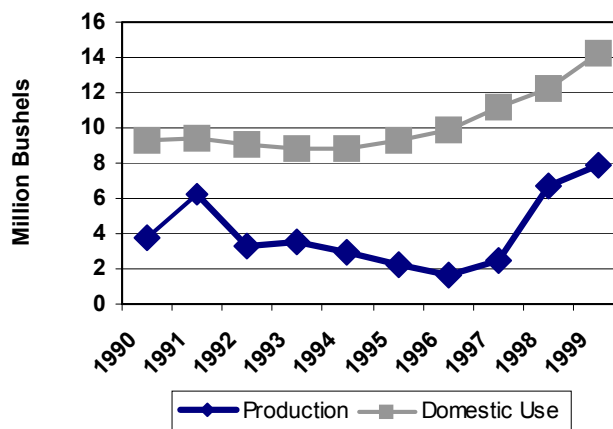
Figure 1: Flaxseed Production by Country: 2000



**Figure 2: World Flaxseed Production:
1991-2000**



**Figure 3: U.S. Flaxseed Production and
Domestic Use: 1990-1999**



Consumption:

Recently, flaxseed has drawn wider attention as health research has found benefits related to human consumption. Several studies have found that flaxseed can be a cholesterol-lowering agent like oat bran, fruit pectin and other food ingredients that contain soluble fiber. As a result, scientists at the American National Cancer Institute singled out flaxseed as one of six foods that deserved special study as a potential cancer-fighting agent. Long-term studies of flaxseed effects in women with breast cancer are underway. U.S. consumption has increased during the latter part of the 1990's (Figure 3).

Meal produced by crushing flaxseed is an excellent source of protein for livestock as it contains 35 percent crude protein. Flaxseed that is not crushed is generally used as birdseed for domesticated and wild birds.

Imports and Exports:

Belgium-Luxemburg, United States, Germany and the Netherlands are major importers of flaxseed (Table 1).

Table 1: World Flaxseed Imports, 2000

Flaxseed Imports	Metric Tons	Share of World
Belgium-Luxembourg	69,418	29.21%
United States	44,294	18.64%
Germany	35,167	14.80%
Netherlands	29,575	12.45%
World	237,635	100.00%

Table 2 indicates that Canada is the largest world exporter, while the U.S. is a very minor player.

Table 2: World Flaxseed Exports, 2000

Flaxseed Exports	Metric Tons	Share of World
Canada	127,797	61.45%
United Kingdom	24,699	11.88%
Belgium-Luxembourg	24,547	11.80%
United States	443	0.21%
World	207,963	100.00%

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