

Agricultural Trade and Services

Trade-supporting services are essential to a vibrant, growing, agricultural economy, particularly in marketing and distribution to consumers, domestically and internationally. These important services include:

Export Financing

Commercial, government-sponsored enterprises (GSEs) and federal lenders have dedicated export lending programs to assist agricultural cooperatives and companies in selling products around the world by providing letters of credit, offering specialized insurance products and administering loan guarantee programs.

Price Discovery-Futures Markets

The futures industry provides a wide variety of contracts and products that serve as important risk management and price discovery tools for farmers, ranchers, processors and exporters, and are often used by importers as well. To function sustainably, our agricultural trade system depends on a strong, transparent futures industry to help set prices and manage volatility in the global marketplace.

Transportation

Affordable, reliable shipping of commodities and products from the farm or processing facility to foreign destinations by truck, railroad, inland waterway and ocean transportation modes is essential in delivering U.S. agricultural products to foreign customers and to compete in world markets. With more than one-third of U.S. agricultural production (valued at more than \$136 billion) exported in 2011, the physical movement of commodities and foods is critical to agricultural trade.

Research

The global expansion of markets for agricultural inputs, such as seed, fertilizer and equipment (including biotechnology), is encouraging companies to increase investments in innovative research aimed at improving agricultural production worldwide. The expanding agricultural research and development sector enables the expansion of U.S. agricultural production to meet growing international demand for food and fiber, and the marketing of crop improvement products and technologies directly to foreign farmers and ranchers further boosts agriculture's collective ability to feed and clothe a growing world population.

Retail Food Marketing

The processing, packaging, exporting and operating of in-country retail markets is an increasingly important service that enables U.S. farmers and ranchers to make their commodities available to consumers around the world. International retail marketing is a dynamic system that helps tailor products with consumer needs and preferences, and provides demand signals back to U.S. farmers, ranchers and processors.