U.S. exports of distillers grains (DG)—a high-quality feed ingredient produced by dry-mill ethanol facilities—rose slightly in 2020, exceeding 10 million metric tons (MMT) for the seventh straight year. DG were exported to more than 50 countries on six continents.

Although exports fell in April and May as ethanol facilities idled capacity due to the pandemic, they rebounded sharply for the remainder of the year and exceeded 1 MMT monthly from July through September.

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, Department of Commerce, and Department of Agriculture
Exports are a vital component of the overall market for U.S.-produced distillers grains. A record-high 38% of DG output was exported in 2020.

U.S. DG exports left the country through more than 25 ports and exit points in 2020 (the top 10 by volume are shown on the map). New Orleans again handled the most tonnage, followed by Los Angeles and Laredo.

Top Ports of Exit for 2020 U.S. Distillers Grains Exports

- New Orleans, 32%
- Los Angeles, 17%
- Laredo, 12%
- Pembina, 6%
- Seattle, 5%
- Duluth, 7%
- New York, 2%
- Norfolk, 7%
- Savannah, 7%
- El Paso, 1%
Mexico remained the top destination for U.S. DG exports in 2020, taking 16% of the total. Still, shipments to both Mexico and Canada declined. Exports to most other top destinations rose, with Thailand and Turkey exhibiting strong growth.
Although overall DG exports were stable, there were shifts in the regional mix. DG exports grew by double-digit percentages to Southeast Asia, the top regional destination, and the Middle East. Shipments to other North American countries receded.

China was the top destination for U.S. DG exports from 2012 to 2016, taking 51% of the total in 2015. However, by 2019 it accounted for just 2% of shipments due to the imposition of punitive duties. In 2020, volumes rebounded somewhat, and China was the 11th largest destination.

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, Department of Commerce, and Department of Agriculture
U.S. DISTILLERS GRAINS EXPORTS: VALUE

U.S. DG exports had an aggregate value of $2.33 billion in 2020, the fifth highest on record. DGs are an important revenue source for dry-mill ethanol facilities, and exports are a key component of DG demand.

Unit values for U.S. DG exports were $212 per MT in 2020, a slight increase over the previous two years due to constrained supplies and an autumn rally in agricultural commodities markets.

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, Department of Commerce, Department of Agriculture.
The United States imported 274,000 MT of DG in 2020, down 9% from 2019 and below levels experienced over the last decade. U.S. DG imports were equivalent to just 3% of DG exports and 1% of domestic DG consumption.

Canada was again the top supplier of U.S. DG imports in 2019, shipping 236,000 MT to the United States. Brazil and China were the only other two significant DG exporters to the U.S. market.
U.S. exports of corn gluten meal—a feed co-product made by ethanol wet mills—toaled **783,000 MT** in 2020. **Indonesia**, **Chile**, **Egypt** and **Colombia** were the top destinations.

U.S. exports of corn gluten feed—also a co-product made by wet-mill ethanol facilities—declined to **776,000 MT** in 2019. **Two-thirds** of shipments went to **Ireland** and **Israel**.
ABOUT THE DATA IN THIS REPORT

U.S. Co-product Export and Import Data

- The export and import data in this report include products classified under the following Harmonized Tariff Schedule (HTS) codes:
  - 2303300000: Brewing or distilling dregs and waste (Distillers Grains)
  - 2303100010: Residues of starch manufacture and similar residues: Corn gluten feed
  - 2303100020: Residues of starch manufacture and similar residues: Corn gluten meal

Sources


The Renewable Fuels Association publishes monthly summaries of export and import data for ethanol and distillers dried grains in its Trade Monitor.

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