

# Serving France's Food Industry

By *Roselyne Gauthier*

In 2011, France's hotel, restaurant and institutional (HRI) food sector served approximately 6.8 billion meals worth almost \$51.4 billion in 175,000 outlets. That's a lot of food. And future prospects are bright. Over the next few years, French HRI sales are expected to grow by at least 5 percent per year. The snack and fast-food segments of the market are expected to surge by 13 percent.

U.S. exporters who focus on product quality, innovation and variety can penetrate France's HRI sector through importers, distributors, cash-and-carry stores and wholesalers. Developing a strong relationship with a savvy and reputable French importer can help an exporter in meeting such challenges as duties, import and sanitary certificates, labeling, paperwork and other documentation.

U.S. suppliers wishing to enter the French market should keep in mind the following consumer trends:

- Children and teenagers prefer ethnic foods such as Chinese, Tex-Mex, North African and Indian.

- Consumers, especially older men and women, are becoming increasingly health-conscious.
- Consumers are demanding variety and high-quality food products that are certified by government authorities as safe.

## Best Product Prospects

Currently, 65 percent of France's food imports comes from fellow European Union (EU) members, such as the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, Germany, Spain, the United Kingdom and Italy. Only 3 percent comes from the United States. To expand market share, U.S. exporters must adapt their products for the HRI sec-



## U.S. EXPORTERS WHO FOCUS ON PRODUCT QUALITY, INNOVATION AND VARIETY CAN PENETRATE FRANCE'S HRI SECTOR.

tor. For example, frozen foods such as fish, vegetables and desserts that are easy to use have great appeal to caterers and restaurateurs. There is also strong demand for salad dressings and tomato sauces.

Other products with particularly good sales potential include:

- **Nonalcoholic beverages**—Consumption of nonalcoholic drinks rose 1.8 percent in 2001. Fruit and vegetable juices, especially orange and grapefruit juices, have the most promise.
- **Seafood**—France is a major importer of seafood. Currently, about 40 percent of all seafood imports comes from the EU, and the rest from Norway, Thailand, Iceland, Senegal and the United States. U.S. seafood with convenient packaging and innovative formats has the best chance of selling to French restaurants. Fresh salmon, cod and shrimp are best sellers, and demand is growing for lobster, scallops and canned salmon. The popularity of fish fillets and ready-to-eat seafood is increasing.
- **Alcoholic beverages**—French consumers still drink wine when they go out to eat. Their growing interest in “exotic” wines has opened the door to U.S. wines. The market for beer is also growing as the French see it as a good complement to Tex-Mex foods.
- **Exotic meats**—Because France does not produce exotic meats, there is an open market for approved imports of these products. U.S. ostrich and bison can be imported, provided the slaughterhouse is EU-certified and the animals are raised without growth stimulants.
- **Fruits and vegetables**—This dynamic sector offers good opportunities for U.S. exporters of reasonably priced products. While the EU supplies many of France's fruit and vegetable imports, growing de-



60016

mand for exotic fruits and vegetables could be a boon to U.S. exporters.

- **Dairy products**—Yogurt and other fermented milk products are becoming more popular among increasingly health-conscious consumers. Although U.S. exporters face high tariffs, niches exist for producers of prepared ingredients such as sauces, grated cheeses and individually packaged desserts.

There are also good prospects in the French HRI sector for dried fruits and nuts, snack foods, soups, ethnic foods, breakfast cereals and rice.

### Convenience in Demand

Because of their convenience, all kinds of ready-prepared and single-portion packaged foods are in demand by French HRI buyers.

Large French hotel chains, such as Accor, Envergnure and Choice, are industry leaders. The Choice group expects to open 130 hotels in France over the next five years. U.S. exporters of competitively priced, quality food products may find success in

selling directly to these chains. Similarly, the growth of restaurant chains in France presents U.S. exporters with direct selling opportunities. Food sales in U.S.-style fast-food restaurants—led by McDonald's and followed by Quick, a distant second—are still rising. French fast-food restaurants, which offer typically French foods such as baguette sandwiches, quiches and salads, are on the rise as well. ■

*The author is an agricultural specialist in the FAS Office of Agricultural Affairs, U.S. Embassy, Paris, France. For more information, or for assistance in entering the French retail market, contact that office at: Tél.: (011-33-1) 4312-2277; Fax: (011-33-1) 4312-2662; E-mail: [agparis@fas.usda.gov](mailto:agparis@fas.usda.gov); Web site: [www.amb-usa.fr/fas/fas.htm](http://www.amb-usa.fr/fas/fas.htm)*

For details, see FAS Report FR2026. To find it on the Web, start at [www.fas.usda.gov](http://www.fas.usda.gov), select **Attaché Reports** and follow the prompts.

