

**Title** Fresh pineapple market from the banal to the vulgar  
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### **Abstract**

Pineapple is a very large fruit crop at the world level. Production totals 20 million tonnes (source: FAO), putting it in seventh position with pear and ahead of peach and nectarine. Production has doubled in the last two decades and quadrupled since the early 1970s. Nearly 90% of production is concentrated in a dozen countries. Traditionally, Asia accounts for more than 50% of production, with five countries in the world's top ten: Thailand (2.3 million tonnes), the Philippines (2.2 million), China (1.4 million), India (1.3 million) and Indonesia (1.3 million). Thailand lost the position of world leader that it had held for decades to Brazil (2.5 million tonnes) and is threatened by the strong growth of the Philippines. Costa Rica is now the world's fourth-largest producer with 1.6 million tonnes and is specialized in the fresh pineapple market. It exported a little more than 1.4 million tonnes in 2009, that is to say three quarters of world export supply.

World production developed for more than ten years, however, estimated figures for 2009 show that production decreased again after a difficult 2008. If demand has increased favorably in recent years, it is because the fresh fruit segment has fuelled production and world exports. Nevertheless, 2009 marks the end-doubtless provisional-of an avalanche of good performances. European imports have slipped below the 900000-tonne mark to 880 194 tonnes in 2009.

A growth crisis or a reversal of the trend? It is difficult to tell. The economic downturn can be mentioned as an external factor affecting the sector. GNP decreased by more than 4% in 2009 in EU-27, the greatest fall since the creation of the common market in 1957. So it is not surprising to see repercussions on the pineapple market. One might also have thought that the meteorological shocks of 2008 and 2009 in Central America had reduced the export potential of countries like Costa Rica, Panama or Honduras. However, there is no depression in the United States, the other import market (700000 tonnes). All that can be said is that there has been no growth.

The crisis in value-added was more serious than the volume crisis. Unit value fell. In contrast with the possible recovery of volumes, the depreciation of the pineapple market is a weighty trend. The comparative movement of the customs value of imports from Costa Rica and Côte d'Ivoire since 1996 shows that the over-valuing of 'Sweet' in comparison with the old 'Smooth Cayenne' standard is ancient history or soon will be. The unit value curves joined in 2009, wiping out ten years of very contrasting trends for the two sources. The

driving force behind this ten-year interlude is finally very classic. They combine an immoderate increase in volumes resulting from the diversification of sources and operators preceding an overall decrease in quality at the import and retail stages. The fruit became ordinary and thus lost value. European imports increased five-fold in 20 years! It has been a while since we could call pineapple a niche fruit or specialised produce. We should rather wonder when EU imports will reach the symbolic million-tonne level. In addition to the question of volumes, pineapple has also progressed from niche consumption to mass consumption. Market releases are linear. After a decade of development, the fruit has now become ordinary. Nevertheless, growth potential is still large if only as a result of supply pressure, which is not at all likely to decrease in the coming years.