

# Virginia's agricultural exports soar 27 percent in 2008

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Va. agricultural exports soar 27 percent in 2008. The value of the state's crops rises to \$2.22 billion as variety pays dividends

Virginia's agricultural exports climbed by 27 percent last year thanks to a strong global demand for the state's varied crops.

"Having a diversified portfolio of markets helps you weather economic storms," said Todd P. Haymore, commissioner of the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. "And it puts you in place to grow when economic times are good."

The value of the exports for 2008 jumped to \$2.22 billion, compared with \$1.74 billion in 2007, according to VDACS.

Last year the state exported:

- soybeans, wheat, corn, barley and animal feed valued at \$792 million; un-manufactured tobacco valued at \$442 million; and meat and poultry valued at \$302 million;
- a total of \$240 million worth of wood products, \$170 million worth of fats and oils, \$51 million worth of cotton and \$22 million worth of marine and aquaculture products; and
- fresh vegetables worth \$15.5 million with \$7.8 million for raw peanuts and nearly \$5 million for hides and skins. Haymore said state officials have pushed to build export markets in developed and developing nations.

Canada and Egypt remained Virginia's top export markets for 2008. Other top agricultural export markets include Switzerland, Morocco, China, Indonesia, Venezuela, Turkey, Germany, Russia, the Netherlands, the Dominican Republic, Hong Kong, Japan, the Philippines, Malaysia, Jamaica, Vietnam and Taiwan.

Haymore said a growing export market ultimately helps with farmland preservation in Virginia.

"If farmers have a marketplace and they are profitable, they are going to want to keep producing and their land is not going to end up turning into a subdivision or a shopping mall."

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