

# Super Christmas Ag Facts

Sugar, dairy and Christmas trees...oh my!



By Jennifer Dorsett

It's the most wonderful time of the year! After a seemingly never-ending 2020, I think many of us are extra-glad to break out the tinsel and mistletoe and have something to celebrate.

Back in 2018, I wrote about how Christmas wouldn't be the same without Texas agriculture.

But now, let's talk fun ag facts at Christmas! Here are a few interesting tidbits on a few of the products and ingredients central to our holiday celebrations and how those products stack up in Texas.

### Sugar

Do you enjoy a few sweet treats around the holidays? About 91 percent of Americans say they celebrate the winter holidays with chocolate and candy. According to The Sugar Association, retail sugar sales increase by about 50 percent each year during the period from Thanksgiving to New Year's Day.

And Texas is one of only three sugarcane-growing states in the U.S. About 112 farmers in the Rio Grande Valley grow 41,000 acres of sugarcane annually, contributing around \$140 million to the Texas economy.

### Christmas Trees

Millions of American families purchase and decorate live Christmas trees every year—to the tune of about 26 million trees sold every year over the past decade, according to the National Christmas Tree Association. And 98 percent of all trees sold each year at Christmas are grown on farms. The other 2 percent come from managed state forests or privately-owned lands.

While the main Christmas tree-growing regions of the U.S. are in Oregon and North Carolina, Texas grows its fair share of the conifers. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) 2017 Census of

Agriculture, the latest year for which data is available, shows 125 Christmas tree farms in the state grew about 945 acres of Christmas trees that year.

### Dairy

Grandma's famous Christmas sugar cookies wouldn't be as tasty without a big helping of butter in the ingredient list. Cheese boards, of course, are the star of many holiday party food spreads. And we all know it's customary to leave milk and cookies for Santa as a thank-you for bringing our gifts. It's safe to say dairy is a major reason to



savor the holiday season.

In the U.S., butter consumption has increased in recent years after a decades-long shift to margarine and other vegetable oil-based spreads. USDA data shows U.S.

consumption of butter is at about 6 lbs. per person in 2019. And U.S. annual butter production is on the rise again, hitting 2.12 billion lbs. in 2020, a level not seen since the 1940s.

Whole milk, yogurt and cheese

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