



# Q&A Almonds



with  
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## Around the world: How global consumers perceive almonds

For nine years running, the Almond Board of California (ABC; Modesto, CA), has conducted an online Global Perceptions Study that highlights how consumers feel and interact with nuts—especially almonds.

We spoke with Rob Renegar, associate insights director at the Sterling Rice Group, to discuss what the global consumers shared — and what they said speaks volumes. “Across the markets we surveyed, almonds continue to have a strong position with consumers — both as a standalone snack and ingredient in bars, beverages and chocolate,” says Renegar. “The data will help determine what types of resources ABC can provide manufacturers across the regions for future product development and continue to drive positive perceptions from global consumers.”



**ABC:** What did 2019's study reveal about global consumption patterns? What about almonds stood out to global consumers?

**ABC:** Can you share more about how global consumers perceive almonds' health attributes?

**RENEGAR:** The US is one of the strongest markets for almond consumption and that is no surprise given most almonds are grown in California. However, there is strong consumption in other markets, too, like China and India, and strong growth in Europe, with much of that growth driven by France.

Across the board, consumers are noting almonds' overall health profile as a strength, and their versatility as an ingredient and standalone snack provides diversity in how they are enjoyed. Almonds provide multiple textures that consumers find appealing, from crispy, crunchy almonds to smooth and creamy almond butter.

**RENEGAR:** From the past ten years of this study, we can see that consumers are becoming more aware of what they eat in relation to their health. So, we've seen a rise in their desire to seek out healthy foods. And health is an area where almonds lead because of their broad, holistic health perceptions and their specific health benefits. The overall nutrition and healthfulness of almonds is well-known — most consumers report almonds are nutrient-rich and healthy.

Consumers are also becoming more interested in other health benefits from almonds — like skin health. In Asia, especially South Korea, there's awareness of a food's contribution to skin health, but now we're seeing this spread to other markets like Mexico, the UK, Germany, Italy, Japan and India.

This ties in with recent nutrition research conducted by UC Davis. In a 16-week randomized controlled pilot study, researchers found that the participants — healthy, postmenopausal women (ages 53-80) — who ate an almond snack comprising of about 20 percent of their daily total energy had a reduction in wrinkle width of about 10 percent and a reduction in wrinkle severity of about nine percent.<sup>1</sup> Since this study was limited to only cosmetic evaluation,

**ABC:** *What were the biggest snacking-related findings from this study for manufacturers?*

**ABC:** *How do global consumers perceive the other many forms of almonds?*

**ABC:** *We can't discuss consumer perceptions about food without considering environmental sustainability. How do almonds fare globally on this point?*

conducted with a limited number of subjects and only covered 16 weeks, ABC is planning additional research to further study the effects of almonds on skin health as the current findings cannot be generalized to an extended period of time or to a broader sample of the general population.

**RENEGAR:** Almonds receive high marks for convenience and versatility. They are also visually appealing and satisfying. There's just something about whole almonds as a snack form, whether by itself or in a mix, that's easy to grab by the handful or pop in a container to go. We're seeing increases in snacking in France, as well as in South Korea, where almonds are considered one of the top snacking nuts.

We work with Innova Market Insights to track new product introductions across markets, and almonds continue to be the number one nut in new global product introductions. It's exciting to see how some of the same types of products in the US are taking hold in Europe, like cookies and bars made with almond butter, almond milk yogurt, even uniquely flavored almonds.

Another popular snack combination are almonds and chocolate. Global consumers view almonds as adding premium appeal to chocolate products.<sup>2</sup> Other studies have shown that almonds are the number-one ingredient—not just nut but ingredient overall—that consumers would choose to include in their ideal chocolate product.<sup>2</sup> So that gets back to the idea of almonds' versatility and what they add to a product: a sense of premium enjoyment and overall satisfaction.

**RENEGAR:** While almonds are a popular snack on their own, their flavor is very neutral, and blends well with other ingredients. This complementary flavor profile and the availability of multiple forms make it an ideal ingredient for product manufacturers. In particular, almond milk, almond butter and almond flour are growing in use across the globe.

For example, in Germany almond flour is the most popular form and it's commonly used in baking. Another example is in China and India where we're seeing almond butter rise in popularity and used as a standalone snack or dip with fruit.<sup>3</sup>

However, the fastest growing form has been almond milk. We're seeing it consumed as beverage on its own and an ingredient across multiple snacking categories globally. While it's been a popular form here in the US, we're now seeing almond milk become more available in grocery stores in Mexico and Europe. We're excited to see how the growth continues in the coming years.

**RENEGAR:** According to the data,<sup>3</sup> topics that rise to the top of global consumers' concerns about the foods they eat are focused around food safety, the use of chemicals and pesticides, and recycling and using environmentally friendly packaging.

ABC is committed to ensuring food quality and safety and increasing farming efficiencies while minimizing environmental impacts. Almonds.com/growing-good has resources available on wide variety of sustainability topics, including the Almond Orchard 2025 Goals and the Five-Point Pollinator Protection Plan.

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**Methodology:** In all markets surveyed — the United States, Canada and Mexico in North America; China, South Korea, Japan and India in Asia; and Germany, France, the United Kingdom and Italy in Europe—consumers ranged in age from late adolescence to senior. Inputs were captured from the active shopping decision-makers for their households, who weighed in on how, when, where and why they and their families enjoyed almonds.



#### Resources

\* Good news about almonds and heart health. Scientific evidence suggests, but does not prove, that eating 1.5 ounces of most nuts, such as almonds, as part of a diet low in saturated fat and cholesterol may reduce the risk of heart disease. One serving of almonds (28g) has 13g of unsaturated fat and only 1g of saturated fat.

1. Foolad N, Vaughn AR, Rybak I, Burney WA, Chodur GM, Newman JW, Steinberg FM, Sivamani RK. Prospective randomized controlled pilot study on the effects of almond consumption on skin lipids and wrinkles. *Phytotherapy Research*. 2019; 1–6. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ptr.6495>
2. Sterling Rice Group. *Global Chocolate Study*. 2018
3. Sterling Rice Group. *Global Perceptions Study*. 2019