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Abstracts

Welcome to the July issue of Dairy Products China News.

China continues to prove difficult for many exporters, despite the recent upturns in some of the import volumes. Cheese provides a nice example – China was still the 3rd largest non-EU cheese importer in the world in 2022 after Japan and South Korea, but it had been in 2nd place in 2021 before the lowered demand last year saw it fall below South Korea.

Its true that New Zealand's cheese exports remain led by China, which accounted for around 26% of its export volumes last year. However dairy exporters with a greater focus on cheese are finding easier pickings elsewhere – if we consider the growing US cheese export business, for example, China was only its 17th market last year and currently accounts for just 2% of US cheese export volumes YTD May vs. 4% in 2018. Even Taiwan was 15th! Meanwhile, the US has been able to grow its cheese exports in absolute volumes and share of exports terms to its largest market, Mexico (31% of export volumes YTD vs 28% in 2018) and even Australia (currently 8% vs 7% in 2018!) So, whilst China has seen growing cheese imports, its import demand has yet to reach quite the heights we have anticipated in global cheese trade analysis back in the 1990s.

The domestic dairy industry needs to diversify its overall product offer and this has not proven so easy, even in growing categories such as adult formulae, as we note this month – cheese is an obvious area of opportunity and its production will take increasing volumes of milk from the country's increasing local milk supply. Foodservice is now in recovery mode around China – the opening of the 700th Tim Hortons coffee shop in China has just been announced, for instance. Cheese exporters will need to become more and more focused on market expectations, customer requirements and product differentiation in China if they are to keep growing their sales into the market.



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