

KFC Myanmar Expands US Potato Offerings across the Country

America's most recognizable fried chicken restaurant chain, KFC, is also big in many Asian countries. With nearly 20,000 locations in 123 countries and territories, KFC is the world's second largest restaurant chain after McDonald's. While the chain is known for chicken, potatoes are one of its most popular side items.

Myanmar is a relatively new market for Yum Brands, which is the parent company of KFC, Taco Bell and Pizza Hut. Myanmar is, as well, an emerging market for the U.S. potato industry's international marketing program. While potatoes are a popular side item at KFC, it is not necessarily a given that they will source those from United States suppliers. This is especially true because competing suppliers from Europe and elsewhere are actively courting the Myanmar market as well. This makes it crucial that the US firmly establish its potatoes as the market standard for quality to ensure a preference for US products.

Thus, Potatoes USA has utilized MAP funds to conduct ongoing trade education, trade servicing and promotion assistance in Myanmar. The confidence that operators have in U.S. potatoes stems from consumers and foodservice operators alike associating U.S. potatoes with high quality. The Potatoes USA audits and training that occur in this market to ensure proper products are consistently served strengthens that confidence, and ensures that US potato suppliers are the main beneficiary of foodservice growth.

These activities helped convince KFC to add two new US frozen potato products to its menu during the July 2018-June 2019 marketing year. Early in 2019, KFC ran a trial promotion in conjunction with Potatoes USA in five of its outlets to promote a new menu item, mini hash browns. The resulting promotion was such a success in the initial five outlets that it was expanded to all outlets in the country. It has also since added U.S. potato wedges in all of its outlets nationwide.

As the largest QSR in the country with about 34 outlets, KFC's expanded US potato offerings directly impact US exports, which rose 26 percent during MY 18/19 compared with MY 17/18. Total US frozen potato exports in MY 18/19 were \$737,614. With KFC's footprint growing in Myanmar to the tune of a new outlet every 2-3 months, this chain's loyalty will also aid future export growth.