



Unlocking the Potential of **SUNFLOWER KERNELS**

A sustainable, allergen-friendly ingredient meeting modern demands for nutrition & food innovation

U.S.-Grown Sunflower Kernels: Meeting Evolving Consumer Demand

U.S.-grown sunflower kernels are gaining popularity among Canadian food manufacturers looking to meet growing consumer demand for clean ingredients, allergen-friendly and plant-based foods. As people prioritize healthier lifestyles and consumption of whole ingredients, sunflower kernels offer a versatile solution across bakery, snack and plant-based applications while supporting demand for non-GMO, minimally processed ingredients that deliver protein, fibre, healthy fats and other key nutrients.

This white paper explores Canadian market trends shaping the bakery and snack food categories and highlights the nutritional benefits, sustainability advantages and product versatility of U.S.-grown sunflower kernels. It also examines how food manufacturers can leverage sunflower kernels to support product innovation and respond to growing consumer demand for better-for-you foods.

"Canadian consumers want snacks and baked goods that are healthier, allergen-friendly and made with recognizable ingredients. U.S.-grown sunflower kernels offer food manufacturers a versatile ingredient solution that delivers nutrition, crunch and broad consumer appeal."

John Sandbakken, Executive Director
National Sunflower Association



Canadian Market Trends: Bakery & Snacks

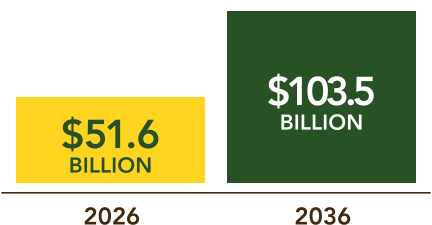
Better-for-you snacking is growing at a **7% annual rate** as consumers seek foods that deliver against nutrition, convenience and clean-label ingredients.⁸

The Canadian bakery products market is projected to reach **\$15.6 billion USD by 2034**, growing at **3.75% annually from 2026 to 2034**.¹ As consumers increasingly seek products that support healthier lifestyles, food manufacturers are responding with bakery and snack innovations that prioritize nutrition, convenience and ingredient transparency.

The following trends and consumer demands are shaping innovation across the Canadian bakery and snack food categories:

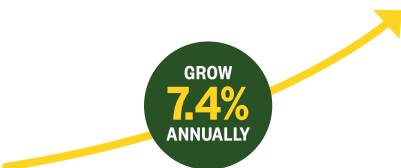
Soaring Demand for Allergen-Sensitive Formulations

With more than three million Canadians reporting having at least one food allergy, it's not surprising that the market for allergen-friendly foods is enjoying significant growth.² Valued at \$51.6 billion USD in 2026, the market is expected to reach \$103.5 billion USD by 2036.³



Plant-Based Snacking

Demand for plant-based and wellness-focused foods continues to influence innovation across bakery and snack categories, including seed-based snacks, snack bars and granola products.⁴



Demand for Artisanal & Healthy Products

Consumers are increasingly seeking products that are handcrafted, unique, and made with high-quality ingredients. Canadian artisan bakery market is projected to grow annually at 7.4% from 2026 to 2034.⁶

High-Protein Formulations

Canada is the fastest-growing regional market in North America for high-protein bakery products, projected to reach \$260.1 million USD by 2033. The category is also expected to grow at 7.4% annually from 2026 to 2033.⁵



Gut Health & Gluten-Free Demand

Canada's gluten-free foods and beverages market is valued at \$1.07 billion USD in 2025 and is projected to reach \$1.64 billion USD by 2031, growing at 9.06% annually. Growth is driven by approximately 400,000 Canadians diagnosed with celiac disease, alongside a growing group of gluten-sensitive consumers.⁷

Nutritional & Health Benefits



A nutrient-dense ingredient, sunflower kernels help food manufacturers meet growing demand for foods that support wellness, ingredient transparency and balanced nutrition. Their mild flavour and versatility make them suitable for a variety of bakery, snack, and plant-based applications.



Key nutritional and formulation benefits of sunflower kernels include:

✓ *Rich in Vitamins & Minerals*

Source of key nutrients including vitamin E, zinc, folate, iron and magnesium.

✓ *Healthy Fats & Functional Nutrition*

Rich in healthy fats, protein, fibre and phytochemicals important to the nutritional quality of our diet.

✓ *Allergen-Friendly Alternative*

An excellent allergen-friendly alternative to tree nuts, sunflower kernels are not considered a priority allergen in Canada.¹⁰ They deliver nutritional value across a variety of food applications without compromising on taste, crunch and texture.

✓ *Non-GMO Ingredient*

Naturally non-GMO, U.S.-grown sunflower kernels help manufacturers meet growing demand for transparency and clean-label formulations.

✓ *Versatile Across Applications*

Available in a variety of formats such as raw, roasted, and ready-to-eat, sunflower kernels offer flexibility for product development at scale and can be incorporated into breads, muffins, granola, snack bars, trail mixes, crackers and plant-based products.



Collectively, these nutritional and formulation benefits position sunflower kernels as a versatile solution for food manufacturers looking to innovate across bakery, snack and plant-based food categories.





Sustainable Choice for Modern Food Innovation

Canadians want transparency about the ingredients in their products and according to the Canadian Centre for Food Integrity⁹, **47% of them are actively seeking out food products that have a minimal environmental impact.** Here is the journey of sunflower kernels from field to customer.



Sunflowers enrich & rejuvenate the soil

They have deep tap roots that help break up the layers of the soil and help make sunflowers drought resistant. They need a lot less water than many other crops. Approximately 200,000 confection acres are grown each year in the USA.

A “no-till” technique is used for growing sunflowers

This process decreases soil erosion and helps keep moisture in the soil. No-till management of sunflower crops also helps reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Sunflower production ranks high on an energy efficiency scale

for soil conservation, low energy and fuel usage. Sunflowers capture carbon dioxide from the air and as a result this leads to significant greenhouse gas emission savings.



Confection sunflower seeds

are shipped to the factory for processing. The hulls from the sunflower seeds are removed but not discarded. Instead, they are used in animal bedding or turned into fuel pellets or fibreboard for the construction industry. Kernels are sent to sellers for packaging.



Sunflower kernels are non-GMO

and are an excellent alternative to nuts and are a healthy addition to bakery products, snack bars, granola, plant-based and vegan foods.



Product Versatility & Applications

With their mild flavour, satisfying crunch and nutritional profile, sunflower kernels can help food manufacturers develop products that align with growing consumer demand for clean-label, allergen-friendly and plant-based foods.

Available in a variety of formats (raw, roasted and ready-to-eat), sunflower kernels offer versatility across the following food innovation categories:

Bakery Products

Can be incorporated into breads, muffins and artisan loaves to add texture, visual appeal and nutritional value.



Trail Mixes & Seed Snack Mixes

A versatile ingredient for trail mixes and seed-based snacks, contributing texture and nutrient density.



Granola & Snack Bars

Provide crunch and flavour in granola, protein and snack bars while supporting formulations focused on protein, fibre and healthy fats.





70% of global consumers would switch products or brands if dissatisfied with texture.¹¹

Sunflower kernels help food manufacturers meet consumer demand for a satisfying, guilt-free crunch across snack foods, granola, plant-based and vegan products, baked goods and more.



Plant-Based & Allergen-Friendly Products

An excellent alternative to tree nuts, sunflower kernels can support plant-based and specialty food formulations that cater to evolving dietary preferences.



Crackers & Crisp Snacks

Enhance crackers and crisp snacks with added crunch, flavour and visual appeal.



Sunflower Butter & Spreads

Can be used in sunflower butter and spread applications, offering a creamy texture and nut-free alternative.

Food Innovation in Action

Canadian food manufacturers are incorporating sunflower kernels into products that align with growing consumer demand for **nutritious, allergen-friendly and wellness-focused foods**. Check out the product spotlight below featuring break-through brands to watch for.

Wellness supplements & superfood blends

Proudly Canadian, **YOUNITED Wellness** is a natural health brand that creates science-backed food supplements focused on supporting physical and mental well-being through high-quality formulations and a holistic approach to healthy living.

"Sunflower kernels are a great fit for our formulations as they offer a mild taste, clean plant-based protein and multiple added nutritional benefits that align with our commitment to creating high-quality supplements and snack bars that nourish the body and support overall well-being. We're receiving an incredible response from our customers who value incorporating high-quality natural wellness products into their daily routines."

Renzo Mariani, Founder,
YOUNITED Wellness





Organic crackers & crisps

Focused on clean, minimally processed foods, **Nud Fud Inc.** brings consumers a fresh and simple approach to snacking with crackers and crisps made from real, whole-food ingredients. This Canadian brand creates organic, vegan and allergen-friendly snacks designed to meet the growing demand for healthier, better-for-you options made with recognizable ingredients.

"Sunflower kernels are an ingredient we love working with! They help create the crunchy texture and flavour that our consumers love, while supporting our commitment to allergen-friendly snacks made with clean, recognizable ingredients. Their versatility aligns perfectly with our approach to creating whole-food snacks made with pure, minimally processed ingredients that consumers can feel good about eating every day."

Julia Kirouac, Founder & CEO,
Nud Food Inc.



Why Choose U.S.-Grown Sunflower Kernels

✓ Consistent Supply & Quality

The U.S. offers premium-quality sunflower kernels produced to high food safety standards. With established growing regions, experienced suppliers and stable export channels into Canada, U.S.-grown sunflower kernels provide manufacturers with a reliable and consistent ingredient solution.

✓ Convenient Access for Canadian Manufacturers

Under the CUSMA/USMCA agreement, U.S.-origin sunflower kernels typically enter Canada at a 0% tariff, helping support competitive pricing and predictable supply for Canadian buyers. Multiple U.S. processors already export directly into Canada, supporting efficient transportation and minimizing supply chain disruptions or shipping delays.

✓ Supporting Consumer Demand & Preferences

Canadian consumers increasingly seek foods made with recognizable ingredients that align with wellness, sustainability and clean-label preferences. Sunflower kernels help meet this demand while delivering a satisfying sensory experience, including texture and crunch, alongside non-GMO, allergen-friendly and better-for-you positioning.

✓ Versatility Across Food Innovation Categories

Available raw, roasted or ready-to-eat, U.S.-grown sunflower kernels can be incorporated into breads, muffins, granola, snack bars, crackers, salad toppings and plant-based foods. Their mild flavour complements both sweet and savoury formulations without overpowering other ingredients.

Canada's bakery products market is projected to reach \$15.6 billion USD by 2034, growing at 3.75% annually from 2026 to 2034.¹

With increasing demand for high-quality, allergen-friendly and clean-label snacks, U.S.-grown sunflower kernels are well-positioned to meet evolving Canadian manufacturer and consumer needs.



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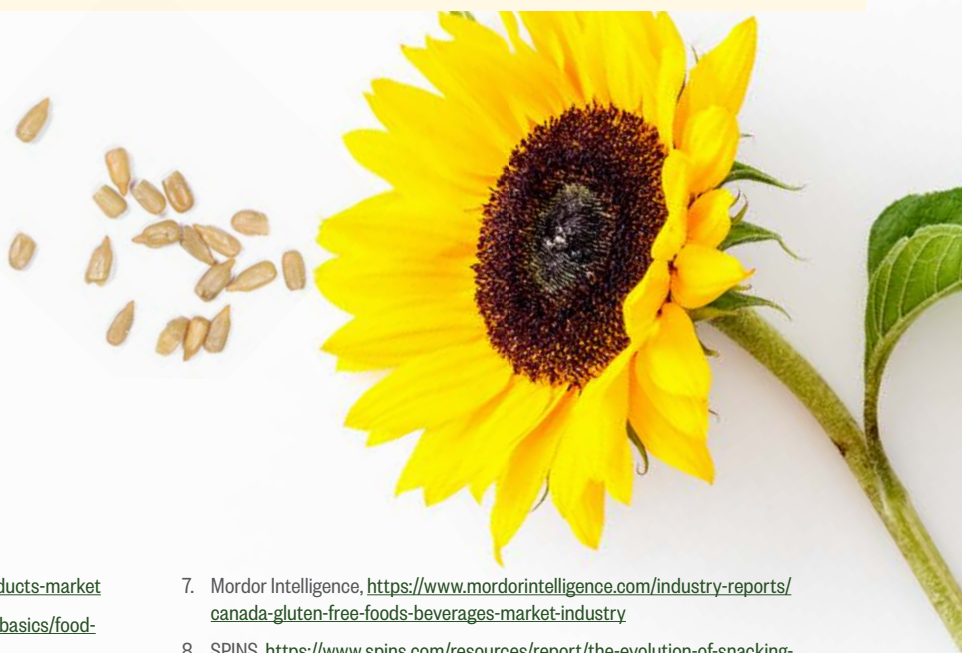
Connect with Suppliers

Interested in incorporating sunflower kernels
into your products or formulations?



Explore how U.S.-grown sunflower kernels
can support your next food innovation.

Scan QR code to start a conversation.



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For more information visit the National Sunflower Association at sunflowernsa.com or email sunoilreport@harbingerideas.com.

