Lactic Acid, Its Salts and Esters

September 2025

Abstract

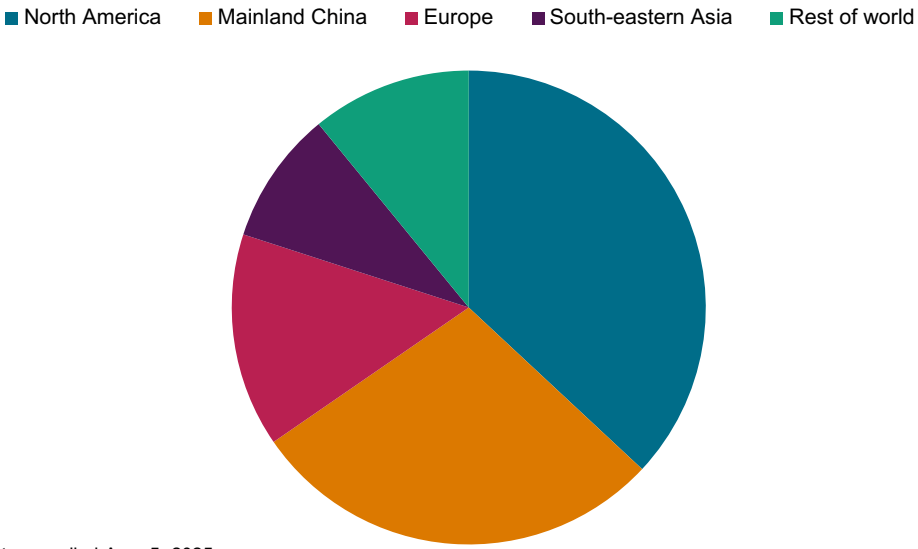
Lactic acid is the starting material for polylactic acid (PLA), a biodegradable polymer. In addition, lactic acid serves as an acidulant, flavor enhancer and shelf-life extender in foods and beverages; its sodium and potassium salts have preservative and antimicrobial properties.

World consumption of lactic acid will increase dramatically during 2025–30, driven by the rapid expansion of PLA production in mainland China, Thailand, France, India and the United Arab Emirates. In 2025, North America is the largest consumer of lactic acid, and PLA production accounts for slightly less than half of world lactic acid consumption. By 2030, mainland China will be the largest consuming region, and PLA production will make up the majority of world lactic acid consumption. Mainland Chinese consumption of lactic acid for PLA production will experience vigorous growth during 2025–30 because of the government's ban on single-use plastic products, which will spur demand for biodegradable PLA and feedstock lactic acid.

The following chart shows world consumption of lactic acid, including consumption of lactic acid as such as well as its use in the production of derivatives (salts, esters, PLA, etc.):

S&P Global
Commodity Insights

World consumption of lactic acid — 2025



Data compiled Aug. 5, 2025.
Lactic acid is on a 88-90 wt% basis.
Source: S&P Global Commodity Insights.
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In North America, mainland China and South-eastern Asia, PLA production is the largest end use for lactic acid in 2025; food and beverage applications are second in importance. In contrast, consumption of lactic acid for PLA production is negligible in Europe and the rest of the world. In these regions, food and beverage applications dominate consumption.

Worldwide lactic acid consumption is forecast to increase strongly from 2025 to 2030. Robust demand growth is expected in Western Europe, mainland China, India, South-eastern Asia (especially Thailand) and the Middle East as a result of increased PLA production. In other regions, more moderate consumption growth will be driven by food and beverage applications.

For more detailed information, see the table of contents, shown below.

S&P Global's Chemical Economics Handbook – *Lactic Acid, Its Salts and Esters* is the comprehensive and trusted guide for anyone seeking information on this industry. This latest report details global and regional information, including

Global summary; regional coverage

Producers with annual capacities and plant sites

Production figures and trends

Consumption and forecasts by end use application

Manufacturing processes and environmental issues

Trade – imports and exports

Key benefits

S&P Global's Chemical Economics Handbook – *Lactic Acid, Its Salts and Esters* has been compiled using primary interviews with key suppliers, organizations and leading representatives from the industry in combination with S&P Global's unparalleled access to upstream and downstream market intelligence, expert insights into industry dynamics, trade and economics.

This report can help you:

– Identify trends and driving forces influencing chemical markets

– Forecast and plan for future demand

– Understand the impact of competing materials

– Identify and evaluate potential customers and competitors

– Evaluate producers

– Track changing prices and trade movements

– Analyze the impact of feedstocks, regulations and other factors on chemical profitability

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