

DOLE FOOD COMPANY INC

Form 10-K

March 17, 2004

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SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION

Washington, D.C. 20549

Form 10-K

(Mark One)

ANNUAL REPORT PURSUANT TO SECTION 13 OR 15(d) OF THE SECURITIES EXCHANGE ACT OF 1934

For the fiscal year ended January 3, 2004

or

TRANSITION REPORT PURSUANT TO SECTION 13 OR 15(d) OF THE SECURITIES EXCHANGE ACT OF 1934

For the transition period from to

Commission File Number 1-4455

Dole Food Company, Inc.

(Exact name of Registrant as specified in its charter)

Delaware
*(State or other jurisdiction of
incorporation or organization)*

99-0035300
*(IRS Employer
Identification No.)*

One Dole Drive, Westlake Village, California 91362

(Address of principal executive offices)

Registrant's telephone number including area code:

(818) 879-6600

Securities registered pursuant to Section 12(b) of the Act:

Title of Each Class

Name of Each Exchange on Which Registered

Common Stock, \$0.001 Par Value

none

Securities registered pursuant to Section 12(g) of the Act:

None

Indicate by check mark whether registrant (1) has filed all reports required to be filed by Section 13 or 15(d) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 during the preceding 12 months (or for such shorter period that the registrant was required to file such reports), and (2) has been subject to such filing requirements for the past 90 days. Yes No

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Indicate by check mark if disclosure of delinquent filers pursuant to Item 405 of Regulation S-K is not contained herein, and will not be contained, to the best of registrant's knowledge, in definitive proxy or information statements incorporated by reference in Part III of this Form 10-K or any amendments to this Form 10-K.

Indicate by check mark whether the registrant is an accelerated filer (as defined in Exchange Act Rule 12b-2). Yes No

The approximate aggregate market value of voting and non-voting stock held by non-affiliates of the registrant was \$0 as of the last business day of the registrant's most recently completed second fiscal quarter.

The number of shares of Common Stock outstanding as of March 17, 2004 was 1,000.

DOCUMENTS INCORPORATED BY REFERENCE

None

DOLE FOOD COMPANY, INC.

FORM 10-K

Fiscal Year Ended January 3, 2004

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PART I

Item 1. Business

Dole Food Company, Inc. was founded in Hawaii in 1851 and was incorporated under the laws of Hawaii in 1894. Dole reincorporated as a Delaware corporation in July 2001. Unless the context otherwise requires, Dole Food Company, Inc. and its consolidated subsidiaries are referred to herein as the Company, Dole, our and we.

Dole's principal executive offices are located at One Dole Drive, Westlake Village, California 91362, telephone (818) 874-4000. During fiscal year 2003, we had, on average, approximately 36,000 full-time permanent employees and 23,000 full-time seasonal or temporary employees, worldwide. Dole is the world's largest producer and marketer of high-quality fresh fruit, fresh vegetables and fresh-cut flowers, markets a growing line of packaged foods and is a produce industry leader in nutrition education. Our website address is www.dole.com. Since we have only one stockholder and since our debt securities are not listed or traded on any exchange, we do not make available free of charge, on or through our website, electronically or through paper copies our annual report on Form 10-K, quarterly reports on Form 10-Q, current reports on Form 8-K, or any amendments to those reports.

Dole's operations are described below. For detailed financial information with respect to Dole's business and its operations, see Dole's Consolidated Financial Statements and the related Notes to Consolidated Financial Statements, which are included in this report.

Overview

We are the world's largest producer of fresh fruit, fresh vegetables and fresh-cut flowers, and we market a growing line of value-added products. We are one of the world's largest producers of bananas and pineapples, a leading marketer of citrus and table grapes worldwide and an industry leader in packaged fruit products, ready-to-eat salads and vegetables. Our most significant products hold the number 1 or number 2 positions in the respective markets in which we compete. For the fiscal year ended January 3, 2004, we generated revenues of approximately \$4.8 billion.

We provide wholesale, retail and institutional customers around the world with high quality food products that bear the DOLE® trademarks. The DOLE brand was introduced in 1933 and we believe it is one of the most recognized for fresh and packaged produce in the United States as evidenced by our 42% unaided consumer brand awareness, twice that of our nearest competitor, according to C.A. Walker and Associates. We utilize product quality, food safety, brand recognition, competitive pricing, customer service and consumer marketing programs to enhance our position within the food industry. Consumer and institutional recognition of the DOLE trademarks and related brands and the association of these brands with high quality food products contribute significantly to our leading positions in the markets that we serve.

We source or sell over 200 products in more than 90 countries. Our fully-integrated operations include sourcing, growing, processing, distributing and marketing our products. Our products are produced both directly on Dole-owned or leased land and through associated producer and independent grower arrangements under which we provide varying degrees of farming, harvesting, packing, storing, shipping, stevedoring and marketing services.

Industry

The worldwide fresh produce industry is characterized by consistent underlying demand and favorable growth dynamics. In recent years, the market for fresh produce has grown at a rate above population growth, supported by ongoing trends including greater consumer demand for healthy, fresh and convenient foods, increased retailer square footage devoted to produce, and increased emphasis on fresh produce as a differentiating factor in attracting customers. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization, worldwide produce production grew 3.6% per annum from 814 million metric tons in 1990 to an estimated 1,244 million in 2002. Total wholesale fresh produce sales in the United States surpassed \$80 billion in 2001, up from

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approximately \$35 billion in 1987, representing a 6.1% compounded annual growth rate. In the US, wholesale fresh produce sales are split roughly evenly between the retail and foodservice channels.

Health conscious consumers are driving much of the growth in demand for fresh produce. Over the past 20 years, the benefits of natural, preservative free foods have become an increasingly prominent element of the public dialogue on health and nutrition. As a result, consumption of fresh fruit and vegetables has increased markedly. According to the USDA, Americans consumed 54 more pounds of fresh fruit and vegetables per capita in 2000 than they did in 1986. Time-starved consumers are also demonstrating continued demand for convenient, ready to eat products. Food manufacturers have responded with new product introductions and packaging innovations in segments such as bagged baby carrots and ready-to-eat salads, contributing to industry growth. For example, the US market for fresh-cut produce has increased from an estimated \$3 billion in 1994 to an estimated \$11 billion in 2000. According to the International Fresh Cut Produce Association, growth in the fresh cut produce market is forecasted to continue at a compound annual rate of 6.4%, reaching approximately \$15 billion by 2005.

Retail consolidation and the growing importance of food to mass merchandisers are major factors affecting the food manufacturing and fresh produce industries. As food retailers have grown and expanded, they have sought to increase profitability through value-added product offerings and in-store services. As fresh produce has become a strategic focus, retailers have expanded square footage dedicated to produce departments by almost 7% per annum between 1994 and 1999. This development has led to an increase in produce sales as a percentage of total supermarket sales, from 8.8% in 1987 to 9.8% in 2001, according to the Food Marketing Institute. The fresh produce category is also attractive to retailers due to its higher margins. According to the USDA's Agriculture Information Bulletin No. 758, gross margins for the produce department were 33% compared to a 26% average for the entire store in 1997. Fully integrated produce companies, such as Dole, are well positioned to meet the needs of large retailers through the delivery of consistent, high quality produce, reliable service, competitive pricing and innovative products. Established produce companies have sought to strengthen relationships with leading retailers through value-added services such as banana ripening and distribution, category management, branding initiatives and establishment of long term supply agreements.

Competitive Strengths

Our competitive strengths have contributed to our strong historical operating performance and should enable us to capitalize on future growth opportunities:

Market Share Leader. Our most significant products hold the number 1 or number 2 positions in the respective markets in which we compete. We maintain number 1 market share positions in global bananas, winter fruits exported from Chile, and in North American iceberg lettuce, celery, cauliflower, ready-to-eat salads and packaged fruit products, including our line of plastic fruit cups called FRUIT BOWLS® and FRUIT-N-GEL BOWLS™. In addition, we believe that we are the only fully integrated fresh-cut flower and bouquet supplier of our size in North America.

Strong Global Brand. Consumer and institutional recognition of the DOLE trademark and related brands and the association of these brands with high quality food products contribute significantly to our leading positions in each of the markets that we serve. By implementing a global marketing program, we have made the distinctive red DOLE letters and sunburst a familiar symbol of freshness and quality recognized around the world. We believe that opportunities exist to leverage the DOLE brand through product extensions and new product introductions.

Low-Cost Production Capabilities. We believe we are one of the lowest cost producers of many of our major product lines, including bananas, North American fresh vegetables and ready-to-eat salads and packaged fruit products. Over the last several years we have undertaken various initiatives to achieve this low-cost position, including closing facilities, centralizing our raw material purchasing and leveraging our global logistics infrastructure more efficiently. We plan to maintain these low-cost positions through a continued focus on operating efficiency.

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State-of-the-Art Infrastructure. We have made significant investments in our production, processing, transportation and distribution infrastructure with the goal of efficiently delivering the highest quality and freshest product to our customers. We own or lease approximately 120,000 acres of land worldwide, over 50 processing, ripening and distribution centers, and the largest dedicated refrigerated containerized shipping fleet in the world, comprising 21 ships and approximately 10,800 refrigerated containers. The investments in our infrastructure should allow for continued growth without the need for sizable capital expenditures in the near term. In addition, our market-leading logistics and distribution capabilities allow us to act as a preferred fresh and packaged food provider to leading global supermarkets and mass merchandisers.

Diversity of Sourcing Locations. We currently source our fresh fruits, vegetables and fresh-cut flowers in 20 countries and distribute products in more than 90 countries. We are not dependent on any one country for the sourcing of any of our products. The largest concentration of production is in Ecuador, where we sourced approximately one third of our Latin bananas in 2003. The diversity of our production sources reduces our risk from exposure to natural disasters and political disruptions in any one particular country.

Experienced Management Team. Our management team has a demonstrated history of delivering strong operating results through disciplined execution. The current management team has been instrumental in our continuing drive to transform Dole from a production driven company into a sales and marketing driven one. In addition, the management team has led our recent company-wide restructuring and improvement initiatives.

Business Strategy

Key elements of our strategy include:

Leveraging our Strong Brand and Market Leadership Position. Our most significant products hold number 1 or number 2 market positions in the respective markets in which we compete. We intend to maintain those positions and continue to expand our leadership both in new product areas and with new customers. We have a history of leveraging our strong brand to successfully enter, and in many cases become the leading player in, value-added food categories. For example, we attained the number 1 market share in the plastic fruit cups category only 3 years after introducing FRUIT BOWLS and FRUIT-N-GEL BOWLS. We intend to continue to evaluate and to strategically introduce other branded products in the value-added sectors of our business.

Focusing on Value-Added Products. Over the last 10 years, we have successfully shifted our product mix toward value-added food categories and away from commodity fruits and vegetables. For example, we have found major success in our ready-to-eat salad lines, bagged baby carrots, and, most recently, FRUIT BOWLS and FRUIT-N-GEL BOWLS. These value-added food categories are growing at a faster rate than our traditional commodity businesses and are generating higher margins. Overall, we have significantly increased our percentage of revenue from value-added products. This shift has been most pronounced in our North American fresh vegetables and packaged foods businesses, where value-added products now account for approximately 58% and 25% of revenue, respectively, of those businesses' revenues. We plan to continue to address the growing demand for convenient and innovative products by investing in our higher margin, value-added food businesses.

Further Improving Operating Efficiency and Cash Flow. While we have greatly improved our profitability and cash flow over the last few years, we intend to continue to focus on profit improvement initiatives and maximizing cash flow. We will continue to:

analyze our current customer base and focus on profitable relationships with strategically important customers;

leverage our purchasing power to reduce our costs of raw materials; and

make focused capital investments to improve productivity.

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Business Segments

We have four business segments: fresh fruit, fresh vegetables, packaged foods and fresh cut flowers. The fresh fruit segment contains several operating divisions that produce and market fresh fruit to wholesale, retail and institutional customers worldwide. The fresh vegetables segment contains two operating divisions that produce and market commodity and fresh-cut vegetables to wholesale, retail and institutional customers primarily in North America, Europe and Asia. The packaged foods segment contains several operating divisions that produce and market packaged foods including fruit, juices and snack foods. Our fresh-cut flowers segment sources, imports and markets fresh-cut flowers, grown mainly in Colombia and Ecuador, primarily to wholesale florists and retail grocers in the United States. For financial information on the four business segments, see Item 7, Management's Discussion and Analysis of Financial Condition and Results of Operations - Segment Results of Operations, and Item 8, Financial Statements and Supplementary Data, Note 16 - Business Segments, in this Form 10-K.

Fresh Fruit

Our fresh fruit business segment has four primary operating divisions: bananas, fresh pineapple, European Ripening & Distribution and Dole Chile. We believe that we are the industry leader in growing, sourcing, shipping and distributing consistently high-quality fresh fruit. The fresh fruit business segment represented approximately 66% of 2003 total revenues of the four segments.

Bananas

We are the world's largest producer of bananas, growing and selling more than 120 million boxes of bananas annually. We sell most of our bananas under the DOLE brand. We primarily sell bananas to customers in North America, Europe and Asia. We are the number one brand of bananas in both North America (an approximate 34% market share) and Japan (an approximate 28% market share) and the number two brand in Europe (an approximate 17% market share). In Latin America, our bananas are primarily sourced in Honduras, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Colombia, Guatemala and Peru and grown on approximately 33,000 acres of company-owned farms and approximately 67,000 acres of independent producers' farms. Bananas produced by us in Latin America are shipped primarily to North America and Europe on our refrigerated and containerized shipping fleet. In Asia, we source our bananas primarily in the Philippines. Bananas accounted for approximately 43% of our fresh fruit business segment revenues in 2003.

Consistent with our strategy to focus on value-added products, we have continued to expand our focus on higher margin, niche bananas. While the traditional green bananas still comprise the majority of our banana sales, we have successfully introduced niche bananas such as organic, low chemical and sweet bananas. We have found that organic produce is a growing category in North America and Europe and there is a strong demand for low chemical and sweet bananas in Asia. We have also improved the profitability of our banana business by focusing on profitable customer relationships and markets.

While bananas are sold year round, there is a seasonal aspect to the banana business. Banana prices and volumes are typically higher in the first and second calendar quarters before there is increased competition from summer fruits. Approximately 80% of our total retail volume in North America is under contract. The contracts are typically one year in duration and help to insulate us from fluctuations in the banana spot market.

European Ripening & Distribution

Our European Ripening & Distribution business distributes DOLE and non-DOLE branded fresh produce in Europe. This business operates 48 sales and distribution centers in nine countries, predominantly in Western Europe. This is a value-added business for us since European retailers generally do not self-distribute or self-ripen. This business assists us in firmly establishing customer relationships in Europe. We own 60% of Saba Trading AB in Sweden. Saba is Scandinavia's leading importer and distributor of fruit, vegetables and flowers, with imports from more than 60 countries. European Ripening & Distribution accounted for approximately 36% of our fresh fruit business segment's revenues in 2003.

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Fresh Pineapples

We are the number two global producer of fresh pineapples, growing and selling more than 20 million boxes annually. We sell our pineapples globally and source them from company operated farms and independent growers in Latin America, Hawaii, the Philippines and Thailand. We produce and sell two principal types of pineapples: the Champaka (or green) pineapple and the sweet yellow pineapple. The Champaka pineapple, which traditionally had been the most widely available type of pineapple, is primarily sold to the foodservice sector and is also used in our packaged products. The sweet yellow pineapple was introduced in 1999 under the DOLE PREMIUM SELECT® label, we also market a substantial portion of this fruit under the DOLE TROPICAL GOLD® label. The sweet yellow pineapple sells for a higher price than the Champaka, which translates into a higher margin for us and our customers. Our sweet yellow pineapple has had excellent market acceptance. Unit volume grew by 68% in 2003 as compared with 2002. Our primary competition in fresh pineapples is Fresh Del Monte. Pineapples accounted for approximately 8% of our fresh fruit business segment's revenues in 2003. In December 2003, Dole acquired land and other assets in Costa Rica from an affiliate of Maui Land and Pineapple Co. This acquisition should help us expand our production and marketing of the DOLE TROPICAL GOLD sweet pineapple in 2004.

Dole Chile

We began our Chilean operations in 1982 and have grown to become the largest exporter of Chilean fruit. We export grapes, apples, pears, stone fruit (e.g., peaches and plums) and kiwifruit from approximately 4,075 company-owned and 29,000 contracted acres. The weather and geographic features of Chile are similar to those of the Western United States, with opposite seasons. Accordingly, Chile's harvest is counter-seasonal to that in the Northern hemisphere, offsetting the seasonality in our other fresh fruit. We primarily export Chilean fruit to North America, Latin America and Europe. Our Dole Chile business division accounted for approximately 7% of our fresh fruit business segment's revenues in 2003.

Fresh Vegetables

Our fresh vegetables business segment operates under two divisions: commodity and value-added. We source our fresh vegetables from company-owned and contracted farms. To satisfy the increasing demand for our products, we have continued to expand production and distribution capabilities of our fresh vegetables segment. We have recently completed expansion projects at our Springfield, Ohio and Yuma, Arizona ready-to-eat salad and vegetable facilities. Our Yuma production facility transitioned from a five-month seasonal operation to a year-round production operation in the fall of 2002 to accommodate growth in this segment. Under our arrangements with independent growers, we purchase fresh produce at the time of harvest and are generally responsible for harvesting, packing and shipping the product to our central cooling and distribution facilities. We have continued to focus on our value-added products, which now account for more than 52% of revenues for this segment. The fresh vegetables business segment accounted for approximately 18% of 2003 total revenues of the four segments.

Commodity Vegetables

We source, harvest, cool, distribute and market more than 20 different types of fresh vegetables, including iceberg lettuce, red and green leaf lettuce, romaine lettuce, butter lettuce, celery, cauliflower, broccoli, carrots, brussels sprouts, green onions, asparagus, snow peas and artichokes. We sell our commodity vegetable products primarily in North America, Asia and, to a lesser extent, Western Europe. In North America, we are the number one provider of lettuce, celery and cauliflower. Our primary competitors in this category include: Tanimura & Antle, Nunes, Growers Vegetable Express, Mann Packing and Ocean Mist.

Value-Added

Our value-added vegetable products include ready-to-eat salads, bagged baby carrots, broccoli florets, and cauliflower florets. Our unit market share of the ready-to-eat salads category reported by A.C. Nielsen was approximately 39.5% for the 12-week period ended December 27, 2003. The ready-to-eat salad category in the

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U.S. experienced a compound annual growth rate of approximately 21% from 1994 through 2003, reflecting the consumer's increasing preference for convenience and healthy eating, with higher growth rates in the earlier years, and is currently expected to be approximately 4%, reflecting household penetration getting closer to its maximum. Our value-added products typically have more stable margins than commodity vegetables, thereby helping to reduce our exposure to commodity price fluctuations. New product development continues to be a key driver in the growth of this segment. Our primary competitor in this segment is Fresh Express, a subsidiary of Performance Food Group Company.

Packaged Foods

Our packaged food segment produces canned pineapple, canned pineapple juice, fruit juice concentrate and fruit in plastic cups, jars and pouches. All of our significant packaged food products hold the number one market position in North America. We continue to dominate the plastic fruit cup category with six of the top ten items in this category. Fruit for our packaged food products is sourced primarily in the Philippines, Thailand and the United States and packed in our three Asian canneries, two in Thailand and one in the Philippines. We have continued to focus on our value-added packaged food products which now account for approximately 29% of the segment's revenues.

Our FRUIT BOWLS products were introduced in 1998 and continue to exceed our volume and share expectations. The trend towards convenience and healthy snacking has been responsible for the explosive growth in the plastic fruit cup category. The plastic fruit cup category is now larger than the apple sauce cup and gelatin cup categories. In an effort to keep up with this demand, we have made significant investments in our Asian canneries. We have significantly increased our FRUIT BOWL capacity in the past four years. We are now able to produce approximately 600 million bowls annually. These investments should ensure our position as an industry innovator and low cost producer. We are now producing more plastic cups than traditional cans. In April 2003, Dole introduced fruit in a 24.5 oz. plastic jar. This growing business achieved a 28% market share during the fourth quarter of 2003.

With a broader line of convenience-oriented products, we are gaining expanded distribution in non-grocery channels. These channels are growing faster than the grocery channel and the cost of gaining new distribution in them is lower. We have gained significant new distribution in these alternative channels, including an increasingly strong No. 1 presence in the club store snack cup business.

Our packaged foods segment accounted for approximately 12% of 2003 revenues of the four segments.

Fresh-Cut Flowers

We entered the fresh-cut flowers business in 1998 and are now the largest producer of fresh flowers in Latin America with over 90% of our Latin American flowers shipped into North America. Our products include over 800 varieties of fresh-cut flowers such as roses, carnations and alstroemeria. The fresh-cut flowers business fits our core competencies including

expertise in perishable products,

strong relationships with and knowledge of the grocery channel,

the ability to manage production in the Southern hemisphere, and

sophisticated logistics capabilities.

We are the only flower importer with guaranteed daily deliveries by air. Immediately after harvesting, our flowers are flown to our Miami facility where temperatures are maintained within one-half degree of required levels in all warehouse and production operations. Maintaining the cold chain enables us to deliver the freshest and healthiest flowers to the market.

In December 2001, in an effort to increase efficiencies and reduce costs, we consolidated our fresh-cut flowers operations, previously housed in seven separate buildings, into a new worldwide headquarters facility in Miami, Florida. A new management team assumed responsibility for the fresh-cut flower business in 2002.

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The new management team has recently implemented initiatives to reduce costs, improve customer profitability and improve demand planning. The customer profitability initiatives included SKU rationalization, customer rationalization and, most importantly, a new strategic focus on the retail grocery channel. In the fresh-cut flowers business, the retail grocery channel is a higher margin market that exhibits less seasonality than the wholesale market. The emphasis on demand planning has given the fresh cut flowers segment a sales and market focus instead of a production focus. Our fresh-cut flowers segment accounted for approximately 4% of 2003 revenues of the four segments.

Global Logistics

We have significant owned and operated food sourcing and related operations in Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, the Philippines, Thailand and the United States. We also source food products in Algeria, Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Cameroon, China, Greece, Italy, Ivory Coast, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Syria, Tunisia and Turkey. Significant volumes of Dole's fresh fruit and packaged products are marketed in Canada, Western Europe, Japan and the United States, with lesser volumes marketed in Australia, China, Hong Kong, New Zealand, South Korea, and certain other countries in Asia, Eastern Europe, Scandinavia, the Middle East and Central and South America.

The produce which we distribute internationally is transported primarily by 21 owned or leased ocean-going vessels. We ship our tropical fruit in owned or chartered refrigerated vessels. All of our tropical fruit shipments into the North American and core European markets are delivered using pallets or containers. This increases efficiency and minimizes damage to the product from handling. Most of the vessels are equipped with controlled atmosphere technology, which improves product quality. Backhauling services, transporting third-party cargo primarily from North America and Europe to Latin America, reduce net transportation costs. We use vessels that are both owned or controlled under long-term leases, as well as vessels chartered under contracts which typically last one year. In addition, our fresh cut flowers are transported via chartered flights.

Customers

Our top 10 customers in 2003 accounted for approximately 27% of total sales. No one customer accounted for more than 5% of total 2003 sales. Our customer base is highly diversified, both geographically and in terms of product mix. Each of our segment's largest customers accounted for less than 23% of that segment's revenues. Our largest customers are leading global and regional mass merchandisers and supermarkets in North America, Europe and Asia.

Sales and Marketing

We sell and distribute our fruit and vegetable products through a network of fresh produce operations in North America, Europe and Asia. Some of these operations involve the sourcing, distribution and marketing of fresh fruits and vegetables while others involve only distribution and marketing. We have regional sales organizations to service major retail and wholesale customers. We also use the services of brokers in certain regions, primarily for sales of packaged foods and ready-to-eat salads. Retail customers include large chain stores with which Dole enters into product and service contracts, typically for a one or two-year term. Wholesale customers include large distributors in North America, Europe and Asia. We use consumer advertising and promotion support, together with trade spending, to support awareness of new items to maintain and grow our exceptional brand awareness, as well as to increase nutrition and health awareness.

Competition

The global fresh and packaged produce markets are intensely competitive, and are generally dominated by a small number of global producers and filled out with independent growers, packers and middlemen. Our large, international competitors are Chiquita, Fresh Del Monte Produce and Del Monte Foods. In certain

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product lines, such as packaged salads, we compete with smaller national producers, such as Fresh Express. In fresh vegetables, a limited number of grower shippers in the US and Mexico supply a significant portion of the US market, with numerous smaller independent distributors also competing. We also face competition from grower cooperatives and foreign government sponsored producers. Competition in the various markets in which we operate is based on reliability of supply, product quality, brand recognition and perception, price and the ability to satisfy changing customer preferences through innovative product offerings.

Employees

During fiscal year 2003, we had on average approximately 36,000 full-time permanent employees and 23,000 full-time seasonal or temporary employees, worldwide. This represents an increased work force from 2002 due largely to increased employment in Asia. Approximately 46% of our employees work under collective bargaining agreements, some of which expire in 2004, subject to automatic renewals unless a notice of non-extension is given by us or the union. We have not received any notice yet that a union intends not to extend a collective bargaining agreement. We believe our relations with our employees are generally good.

Research and Development

Our research and development programs concentrate on sustaining the productivity of our agricultural lands, food safety, product quality of existing products and the development of new value-added products, as well as agricultural research and packaging design. Agricultural research is directed toward sustaining and improving product yields and product quality by examining and improving agricultural practices in all phases of production (such as development of specifically adapted plant varieties, land preparation, fertilization, cultural practices, pest and disease control, post-harvesting, handling, packing and shipping procedures), and includes onsite technical services and the implementation and monitoring of recommended agricultural practices. Research efforts are also directed towards integrated pest management and biological pest control. Specialized machinery is developed for various phases of agricultural production and packaging that reduces labor costs, improves productivity and efficiency and increases product quality. Agricultural research is conducted at field facilities primarily in California, Hawaii, Latin America and Asia. We also sponsor research related to environmental improvements and the protection of worker and community health. The aggregate amounts we spent on research and development in each of the last three years have not been material in any of such years.

Trademark Licenses

We have an agreement with Ice Cream Partners USA, LLC, pursuant to which we have licensed to Nestle our rights to market and manufacture processed products in key segments of the frozen novelty business in the United States and certain other countries, including FRUIT N JUICE® and SORBET N CREAM® bars. DOLEWHIP®, a soft-serve, non-dairy dessert, is manufactured and marketed by Precision Foods, Inc. under license from us. In connection with the sale of the majority of our juice business to Tropicana Products, Inc. in May of 1995, we received cash payments up front and granted to Tropicana a license, requiring no additional future royalty payments, to use certain DOLE trademarks on certain beverage products. We continue to market DOLE canned pineapple juice and pineapple juice blend beverages.

Environmental and Regulatory Matters

Our agricultural operations are subject to a broad range of evolving environmental laws and regulations in each country in which we operate. In the United States, these laws and regulations include the Food Quality Protection Act of 1996, the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act, the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act and the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act.

Compliance with these foreign and domestic laws and related regulations is an ongoing process that is not currently expected to have a material effect on our capital expenditures, earnings or competitive position. Environmental concerns are, however, inherent in most major agricultural operations, including those

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conducted by us, and there can be no assurance that the cost of compliance with environmental laws and regulations will not be material. Moreover, it is possible that future developments, such as increasingly strict environmental laws and enforcement policies thereunder, and further restrictions on the use of agricultural chemicals, could result in increased compliance costs.

Our food operations are also subject to regulations enforced by, among others, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and state, local and foreign equivalents and to inspection by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and other federal, state, local and foreign environmental, health and safety authorities. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration enforces statutory standards regarding the labeling and safety of food products, establishes ingredients and manufacturing procedures for certain foods, establishes standards of identity for foods and determines the safety of food substances in the United States. Similar functions are performed by state, local and foreign governmental entities with respect to food products produced or distributed in their respective jurisdictions.

In the United States, portions of our fresh fruit and vegetable farm properties are irrigated by surface water supplied by local government agencies using facilities financed by federal or state agencies, as well as from underground sources. Water received through federal facilities is subject to acreage limitations under the 1982 Reclamation Reform Act. Worldwide, the quantity and quality of water supplies varies depending on weather conditions and government regulations. We believe that under normal conditions these water supplies are adequate for current production needs.

Legal Proceedings

See Item 3, Legal Proceedings, in this Form 10-K.

Trade Issues

Our foreign operations are subject to risks of expropriation, civil disturbances, political unrest, increases in taxes and other restrictive governmental policies, such as import quotas. Loss of one or more of our foreign operations could have a material adverse effect on our operating results. We attempt to maintain a cordial working relationship in each country where we operate. Because our operations are a significant factor in the economies of certain countries, our activities are subject to intense public and governmental scrutiny and may be affected by changes in the status of the host economies, the makeup of the government or even public opinion in a particular country.

The European Union (EU) maintains banana regulations that impose quotas and tariffs on bananas. In April 2001, the EU reached agreements with the United States and Ecuador to implement a tariff-only import system no later than January 1, 2006. After reaching these agreements, the EU adjusted applicable quotas and amended rules for allocation of licenses for an interim regime preceding the future tariff-only regime. This interim regime began on July 1, 2001. Subsidiaries of Dole are entitled to licenses under the changed rules and are using the licenses in such a way as to maintain and maximize license rights. Dole's earnings have not been negatively impacted by the interim regime and Dole believes that the ongoing impact of the interim regime will not be dilutive to its current earnings levels.

Exports of our products to certain countries or regions, particularly China, Japan, New Zealand, Russia, South Korea, Taiwan and the Middle East, are subject to various restrictions that may be increased or reduced in response to international economic, currency and political factors, thus affecting our ability to compete in these markets.

We distribute our products in more than 90 countries throughout the world. Our international sales are usually transacted in U.S. dollars and major European and Asian currencies, while certain costs are incurred in currencies different from those that are received from the sale of products. Results of operations may be affected by fluctuations in currency exchange rates in both the sourcing and selling locations.

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Seasonality

Our sales volumes remain relatively stable throughout the year. We experience seasonal earnings characteristics, predominantly in the fresh fruit segment, because fresh fruit prices are lower in the second half of the year, when summer fruits are in the markets, than in the first half of the year. Our fresh vegetables segment experiences some seasonality as reflected by higher earnings in the first half of the year. Our packaged foods and fresh-cut flowers segments experience peak demand during certain well-known holidays and observances; the impact is less than in the fresh-fruit segment.

GOING-PRIVATE MERGER TRANSACTION

On March 28, 2003, following stockholder approval, Dole completed the going-private merger transaction pursuant to which David H. Murdock acquired the approximately 76% of Dole's common stock that he and his affiliates did not already own for \$33.50 per share in cash. Upon completion of the merger, Dole became wholly owned by Mr. Murdock through DHM Holding Company, Inc.

RISK FACTORS

In addition to the risk factors described elsewhere in this Form 10-K, you should consider the following risk factors. The risks and uncertainties described below are not the only ones facing our company. Additional risks and uncertainties not presently known or that we currently believe to be less significant may also adversely affect us.

Adverse weather conditions and crop disease can impose costs on our business.

Fresh produce, including produce used in canning and other packaged food operations, is vulnerable to adverse weather conditions, including windstorms, floods, drought and temperature extremes, which are quite common but difficult to predict. Unfavorable growing conditions can reduce both crop size and crop quality. In extreme cases, entire harvests may be lost in some geographic areas. These factors can increase costs, decrease revenues and lead to additional charges to earnings, which may have a material adverse effect on our business, results of operations and financial condition.

Fresh produce is also vulnerable to crop disease and to pests, which may vary in severity and effect, depending on the stage of production at the time of infection or infestation, the type of treatment applied and climatic conditions. For example, black sigatoka is a fungal disease that affects banana cultivation in most areas where they are grown commercially. The costs to control this disease and other infestations vary depending on the severity of the damage and the extent of the plantings affected. These infestations can increase costs, decrease revenues and lead to additional charges to earnings, which may have a material adverse effect on our business, results of operations and financial condition.

Our business is highly competitive and we cannot assure you that we will maintain our current market share.

Many companies compete in our different businesses. However, only a few well-established companies operate on both a national and a regional basis with one or several branded product lines. We face strong competition from these and other companies in all our product lines.

Important factors with respect to our competitors include the following:

Some of our competitors may have greater operating flexibility and, in certain cases, this may permit them to respond better to changes in the industry or to introduce new products and packaging more quickly and with greater marketing support.

Several of our packaged food product lines are sensitive to competition from national or regional brands, and many of our product lines compete with imports, private label products and fresh alternatives.

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We cannot predict the pricing or promotional actions of our competitors or whether those actions will have a negative effect on us.

There can be no assurance that we will continue to compete effectively with our present and future competitors, and our ability to compete could be adversely affected by our leveraged position. See Business Competition.

Our earnings are sensitive to fluctuations in market prices and demand for our products.

Excess supplies often cause severe price competition in our industry. Growing conditions in various parts of the world, particularly weather conditions such as windstorms, floods, droughts and freezes, as well as diseases and pests, are primary factors affecting market prices because of their influence on the supply and quality of product.

Fresh produce is highly perishable and generally must be brought to market and sold soon after harvest. Some items, such as lettuce, must be sold more quickly, while other items can be held in cold storage for longer periods of time. The selling price received for each type of produce depends on all of these factors, including the availability and quality of the produce item in the market, and the availability and quality of competing types of produce.

In addition, general public perceptions regarding the quality, safety or health risks associated with particular food products could reduce demand and prices for some of our products. To the extent that consumer preferences evolve away from products that we produce for health or other reasons, and we are unable to modify our products or to develop products that satisfy new consumer preferences, there will be a decreased demand for our products. However, even if market prices are unfavorable, produce items which are ready to be, or have been, harvested must be brought to market promptly. A decrease in the selling price received for our products due to the factors described above could have a material adverse effect on our business, results of operations and financial condition.

Our earnings are subject to seasonal variability.

Our earnings may be affected by seasonal factors, including:

the seasonality of our supplies and consumer demand;

the ability to process products during critical harvest periods; and

the timing and effects of ripening and perishability.

Although banana production tends to be relatively stable throughout the year, banana pricing is seasonal because bananas compete against other fresh fruit that generally comes to market beginning in the summer. As a result, banana prices are typically higher during the first half of the year. Our fresh vegetables segment experiences some seasonality as reflected by higher earnings in the first half of the year. Also, there is a seasonal aspect to our fresh-cut flower business, with peak demand generally around Valentine's Day and Mother's Day.

Currency exchange fluctuations may impact the results of our operations.

We distribute our products in more than 90 countries throughout the world. Our international sales are usually transacted in U.S. dollars, and European and Asian currencies. Our results of operations are affected by fluctuations in currency exchange rates in both sourcing and selling locations. Although we enter into foreign currency exchange forward contracts from time to time to reduce our risk related to currency exchange fluctuation, our results of operations may still be impacted by foreign currency exchange rates, primarily the yen-to-U.S. dollar and euro-to-U.S. dollar exchange rates. For instance, we currently estimate that a 1% change in the exchange rate of the U.S. dollar to the yen, the euro and the Swedish krona would impact our EBIT by approximately \$2.7 million before accounting for foreign exchange hedges. Because we do not hedge against all of our foreign currency exposure, our business will continue to be susceptible to foreign currency fluctuations.

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We face risks related to our former use of the pesticide DBCP.

We formerly used dibromochloropropane, or DBCP, a nematocide that was used on a variety of crops throughout the world. The registration for DBCP with the U.S. government was cancelled in 1979 based in part on an apparent link to male sterility among factory workers. There are a number of pending lawsuits in the United States and other countries against the manufacturers of DBCP and the growers, including us, who used it in the past. We are aware of 586 DBCP lawsuits although we have not been served in all of them. The cost to defend or settle these lawsuits, and the costs to pay any judgments or settlements resulting from these lawsuits, or other lawsuits which might be brought, could have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition or results of operations. See Item 3, Legal Proceedings, in this Form 10-K.

Our substantial indebtedness could adversely affect our operations, including our ability to perform our obligations under the notes and our other debt obligations.

We have a substantial amount of indebtedness. As of January 3, 2004, we had approximately \$328 million in senior secured indebtedness and other structurally senior indebtedness, \$1,430 million in senior unsecured indebtedness, including outstanding senior notes and debentures, and approximately \$93.6 million in capital leases.

Our substantial indebtedness could have important consequences. For example, it could:

make it more difficult for us to satisfy our obligations;

require us to dedicate a substantial portion of our cash flow from operations to payments on our indebtedness, which would reduce the availability of our cash flow to fund future working capital, capital expenditures, acquisitions and other general corporate purposes;

expose us to the risk of increased interest rates, as certain of our borrowings are at variable rates of interest;

require us to sell assets to reduce indebtedness or influence our decisions about whether to do so;

increase our vulnerability to general adverse economic and industry conditions;

limit our flexibility in planning for, or reacting to, changes in our business and the industry in which we operate;

restrict us from making strategic acquisitions or pursuing business opportunities;

place us at a competitive disadvantage compared to our competitors that have relatively less indebtedness; and

limit, along with the financial and other restrictive covenants in our indebtedness, among other things, our ability to borrow additional funds. Failing to comply with those covenants could result in an event of default which, if not cured or waived, could have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition and results of operations.

The financing arrangements for the going-private merger transactions may increase our exposure to tax liability.

A portion of our senior secured credit facility has been incurred by our foreign subsidiaries and was used to fund the going-private merger transactions. Although we believe, based in part upon the advice of our tax advisors, that our intended tax treatment of such transactions is appropriate, it is possible that the Internal Revenue Service could seek to characterize the going-private merger transactions in a manner that could result in the immediate recognition of taxable income by us. Any such immediate recognition of taxable income would result in a material tax liability, which could have a material adverse effect on our business, results of operations and financial condition.

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Restrictive covenants in our debt instruments restrict or prohibit our ability to engage in or enter into a variety of transactions, which could adversely affect us.

The indentures governing our senior notes due 2009, our senior notes due 2010, our senior notes due 2011, our debentures due 2013 and our senior secured credit facility contain various restrictive covenants that will limit our discretion in operating our business. In particular, these agreements limit our ability to, among other things:

incur additional indebtedness;

make restricted payments (including paying dividends on, redeeming or repurchasing our capital stock);

issue preferred stock of subsidiaries;

make certain investments or acquisitions;

create liens on our assets to secure debt;

engage in transactions with affiliates;

merge, consolidate or transfer substantially all of our assets; and

transfer and sell assets.

In addition, our senior secured credit facility requires us to maintain specified financial ratios and limits our ability to make capital expenditures. These covenants and ratios could have a material adverse effect on our business by limiting our ability to take advantage of financing, merger and acquisition or other corporate opportunities and to fund our operations. Any future debt could also contain financial and other covenants more restrictive than those imposed under the indentures governing our senior notes due 2009, our senior notes due 2010, our senior notes due 2011, our debentures due 2013 and our senior secured credit facility.

A breach of a covenant or other provision in any debt instrument governing our current or future indebtedness could result in a default under that instrument and, due to cross-default and cross-acceleration provisions, could result in a default under our other debt instruments. Upon the occurrence of an event of default under the senior secured credit facility or any other debt instrument, the lenders could elect to declare all amounts outstanding to be immediately due and payable and terminate all commitments to extend further credit. If we were unable to repay those amounts, the lenders could proceed against the collateral granted to them, if any, to secure the indebtedness. If the lenders under our current or future indebtedness accelerate the payment of the indebtedness, we cannot assure you that our assets or cash flow would be sufficient to repay in full our outstanding indebtedness.

We face other risks in connection with our international operations.

Our operations are heavily dependent upon products grown, purchased and sold internationally. In addition, our operations are a significant factor in the economies of many of the countries in which we operate, increasing our visibility and susceptibility to regulatory changes. These activities are subject to risks that are inherent in operating in foreign countries, including the following:

foreign countries could change regulations or impose currency restrictions and other restraints;

in some countries, there is a risk that the government may expropriate assets;

some countries impose burdensome tariffs and quotas;

political changes and economic crises may lead to changes in the business environment in which we operate;

international conflict, including terrorist acts, could significantly impact our financial condition and results of operations;

in some countries, our operations are dependent on leases and other agreements; and

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economic downturns, political instability and war or civil disturbances may disrupt production and distribution logistics or limit sales in individual markets.

The European Union (EU) maintains banana regulations that impose quotas and tariffs on bananas. In April 2001, the EU reached agreements, with the United States and Ecuador to implement a tariff-only import system no later than January 1, 2006. After reaching these agreements, the EU adjusted applicable quotas and amended rules for allocation of licenses for an interim regime preceding the future tariff-only regime. This interim regime began on July 1, 2001. Subsidiaries of Dole are entitled to licenses under the changed rules and are using the licenses in such a way as to maintain and maximize license rights. Although our earnings have not been negatively impacted by the interim regime, our earnings could be affected based on these or similar regulations implemented by the EU.

Terrorism and the uncertainty of war may have a material adverse effect on our operating results.

Terrorist attacks, such as the attacks that occurred in New York and Washington, D.C. on September 11, 2001, the subsequent response by the United States in Afghanistan, Iraq and other locations, and other acts of violence or war in the United States or abroad may affect the markets in which we operate and our operations and profitability. From time to time in the past, our operations or personnel have been the targets of terrorist or criminal attacks, and the risk of such attacks impacts our operations and results in increased security costs. Further terrorist attacks against the United States or operators of United States-owned businesses outside the United States may occur, or hostilities could develop based on the current international situation. The potential near-term and long-term effect these attacks may have on our business operations, our customers, the markets for our products, the United States economy and the economies of other places we source or sell our products is uncertain. The consequences of any terrorist attacks, or any armed conflicts, are unpredictable, and we may not be able to foresee events that could have an adverse effect on our markets or our business.

Our worldwide operations and products are highly regulated in the areas of food safety and protection of human health and the environment.

Our worldwide operations are subject to a broad range of foreign, federal, state and local environmental, health and safety laws and regulations, including laws and regulations governing the use and disposal of pesticides and other chemicals. These regulations directly affect day-to-day operations, and violations of these laws and regulations can result in substantial fines or penalties. There can be no assurance that these fines or penalties would not have a material adverse effect on our business, results of operations and financial condition. To maintain compliance with all of the laws and regulations that apply to our operations, we have been and may be required in the future to modify our operations, purchase new equipment or make capital improvements. Actions by regulators may require operational modifications or capital improvements at various locations. In addition, we have been and in the future may become subject to private lawsuits alleging that our operations caused personal injury or property damage.

We are subject to the risk of product liability claims.

The sale of food products for human consumption involves the risk of injury to consumers. Such injuries may result from tampering by unauthorized third parties, product contamination or spoilage, including the presence of foreign objects, substances, chemicals, other agents, or residues introduced during the growing, storage, handling or transportation phases. We have from time to time been involved in product liability lawsuits, none of which were material to our business. While we are subject to governmental inspection and regulations and believe our facilities comply in all material respects with all applicable laws and regulations, we cannot be sure that consumption of our products will not cause a health-related illness in the future or that we will not be subject to claims or lawsuits relating to such matters. Even if a product liability claim is unsuccessful or is not fully pursued, the negative publicity surrounding any assertion that our products caused illness or injury could adversely affect our reputation with existing and potential customers and our corporate and brand image. Moreover, claims or liabilities of this sort might not be covered by our insurance or by any rights of indemnity or contribution that we may have against others. We maintain product liability insurance

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in an amount that we believe is adequate. However, we cannot be sure that we will not incur claims or liabilities for which we are not insured or that exceed the amount of our insurance coverage.

We are subject to transportation risks.

An extended interruption in our ability to ship our products could have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition and results of operations. Similarly, any extended disruption in the distribution of our products could have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition and results of operations. While we believe we are adequately insured and would attempt to transport our products by alternative means if we were to experience an interruption due to strike, natural disaster or otherwise, we cannot be sure that we would be able to do so or be successful in doing so in a timely and cost-effective manner.

The use of herbicides and other hazardous substances in our operations may lead to environmental damage and result in increased costs to us.

We use herbicides and other hazardous substances in the operation of our business. We may have to pay for the costs or damages associated with the improper application, accidental release or the use or misuse of such substances. Our insurance may not be adequate to cover such costs or damages or may not continue to be available at a price or under terms that are satisfactory to us. In such cases, payment of such costs or damages could have a material adverse effect on our business, results of operations and financial condition.

Events or rumors relating to the DOLE brand could significantly impact our business.

Consumer and institutional recognition of the DOLE trademarks and related brands and the association of these brands with high quality and safe food products are an integral part of our business. The occurrence of any events or rumors that cause consumers and/or institutions to no longer associate these brands with high quality and safe food products may adversely affect the value of the DOLE brand name and demand for our products. We have licensed the DOLE brand name to several affiliated and unaffiliated companies for use in the United States and abroad. Acts or omissions by these companies over which we have no control may also have such adverse effects.

A portion of our workforce is unionized and labor disruptions could decrease our profitability.

As of January 3, 2003, approximately 46% of our employees worked under various collective bargaining agreements. Some of our collective bargaining agreements will expire in fiscal 2004, although each agreement is subject to automatic renewals unless we or the union party to the agreement provides notice otherwise. Our other collective bargaining agreements will expire in later years. While we believe that our relations with our employees are good, we cannot assure you that we will be able to negotiate these or other collective bargaining agreements on the same or more favorable terms as the current agreements, or at all, and without production interruptions, including labor stoppages. A prolonged labor dispute, which could include a work stoppage, could have a material adverse effect on the portion of our business affected by the dispute, which could impact our business, results of operations and financial condition.

DISCLOSURE REGARDING FORWARD-LOOKING STATEMENTS

(Cautionary Statements Under the Private Securities Litigation Reform Act of 1995)

Some of the information included in this Form 10-K and other materials filed or to be filed by us with the Commission contains or may contain forward-looking statements within the meaning of Section 27A of the Securities Act of 1933, as amended, and Section 21E of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, as amended. These statements can be identified by the fact that they do not relate strictly to historical or current facts and may include the words may, will, could, should, would, believe, expect, anticipate, estimate, intend, plan expressions of similar meaning. We have based these forward-looking statements on our current expectations about future events. The forward-looking statements include statements that reflect management's beliefs, plans, objectives, goals, expectations, anticipations and

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intentions with respect to our financial condition, results of operations, future performance and business, including statements relating to our business strategy and our current and future development plans.

The potential risks and uncertainties that could cause our actual financial condition, results of operations and future performance to differ materially from those expressed or implied in this Form 10-K include those set forth under the heading **Risk Factors** in this Item 1.

We urge you to review carefully this Form 10-K, particularly the section **Risk Factors**, for a more complete discussion of the risks to our business.

From time to time, oral or written forward-looking statements are also included in our reports on Forms 10-K, 10-Q and 8-K, Schedule 14A, press releases and other materials released to the public. Although we believe that at the time made, the expectations reflected in all of these forward-looking statements are and will be reasonable, any or all of the forward-looking statements in this Form 10-K, our reports on Forms 10-K, 10-Q and 8-K, Schedule 14A and any other public statements that are made by us may prove to be incorrect. This may occur as a result of inaccurate assumptions or as a consequence of known or unknown risks and uncertainties. Many factors discussed in this Form 10-K, certain of which are beyond our control, will be important in determining our future performance. Consequently, actual results may differ materially from those that might be anticipated from forward-looking statements. In light of these and other uncertainties, you should not regard the inclusion of a forward-looking statement in this Form 10-K, or other public communications that we might make, as a representation by us that our plans and objectives will be achieved, and you should not place undue reliance on such forward-looking statements.

Item 2. *Properties*

We own our executive office facility, in Westlake Village, California. We also maintain divisional offices in Salinas, California and Miami, Florida, which are owned by us. We own our Latin American regional headquarters building in San Jose, Costa Rica, as well as offices in Bogota/ Santa Marta, Colombia and La Ceiba, Honduras. We also maintain offices in Chile, Costa Rica and Ecuador, which are leased from third parties. We maintain our European headquarters in Paris, France and regional offices in Antwerp, Belgium, Athens, Greece, Hamburg, Germany, Milan, Italy, Stockholm, Sweden and Cape Town, South Africa, which are leased from third parties. We own our offices in Madrid, Spain, Rungis, France and Lübeck, Germany. We maintain offices in Japan, China, the Philippines, Thailand, Hong Kong and South Korea, which are leased from third parties. The inability to renew any of the above office leases by us would not have a material adverse effect on our operating results. We believe that our property and equipment are generally well maintained, in good operating condition and adequate for our present needs.

The following is a description of our significant properties.

North America

Our Hawaii pineapple operations for the fresh produce market are located on the island of Oahu and total approximately 3,100 acres which we own.

We own approximately 1,400 acres of farmland in California and Arizona, and lease approximately 11,000 acres of farmland in California and another 4,000 acres in Arizona in connection with our vegetable operations. The majority of this acreage is farmed under joint growing arrangements with independent growers, while the remainder is farmed by us. We own cooling, packing and shipping facilities in Yuma, Arizona and the following California cities: Marina, Gonzales and Huron. Additionally, we have partnership interests in facilities in Yuma, Arizona and Salinas, California, and leases in facilities in Oxnard, California. We own and operate state-of-the-art, ready-to-eat salad and vegetable plants in Yuma, Arizona, Soledad, California and Springfield, Ohio.

We produce almonds from approximately 600 acres, pistachios from approximately 2,000 acres, olives from approximately 900 acres and citrus from approximately 2,700 acres on orchards in the San Joaquin Valley through agricultural partnerships in which we have an interest. We also produce citrus on approximately 120 acres of owned property in the San Joaquin Valley.

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Our Florida based fresh-cut flowers distribution operates from a new 328,000 square foot building completed in 2001, which we own. Approximately 200,000 square feet of this facility is refrigerated. Our fresh-cut flowers group also operates another cooling and distribution facility in the Miami area, which we own. We also operate a leased facility in Los Angeles, California and have sales offices in Dallas, Texas and Bentonville, Arkansas.

Latin America

We produce bananas directly from owned plantations in Costa Rica, Colombia, Ecuador and Honduras as well as through associated producers or independent growing arrangements in those countries and others, including Guatemala. We own approximately 1,800 acres in Colombia, 38,600 acres in Costa Rica, 6,200 acres in Ecuador and 27,100 acres in Honduras, all related to banana production, although some of the acreage is not presently under production. We own a 50% interest in a Guatemala banana producer which owns or controls approximately 7,100 acres in that country.

We own approximately 8,500 acres of land in Honduras, 6,500 acres of land in Costa Rica and 2,900 acres of land in Ecuador, all related to pineapple production, although some of the acreage is not presently under production. Pineapple is grown primarily for the fresh produce market. We own a juice concentrate plant in Honduras for pineapple and citrus. Coconuts are produced on approximately 500 acres of owned land in Honduras.

We grow grapes, stone fruit, kiwi and pears on approximately 4,075 acres owned by us in Chile. We own and operate 11 packing and cold storage facilities, a corrugated box plant and a wooden box plant in Chile. We also operate a fresh-cut salad plant and a small local fruit distribution company in Chile.

We also own and operate corrugated box plants in Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador and Honduras and a value-added vegetable plant in Costa Rica.

In September 2003, Dole sold its interest in an edible oils refinery, a laundry soap factory, a palm oil extraction operation and approximately 3,800 acres of palm oil plantation.

We formally accepted a new Ecuadorian port (Bananapuerto) on September 6, 2002. We indirectly own 35% of Bananapuerto and operate the port pursuant to a port services agreement, the term of which is up to 30 years.

Dole Latin America operates a fleet of seven refrigerated container ships, of which four are owned, two are long-term chartered and one is chartered for a year. In addition, Dole Latin America operates a fleet of fourteen breakbulk refrigerated ships, of which nine are owned and five are long-term chartered. We also cover part of our requirements under contracts with existing liner services and occasionally charter vessels for short periods on a time or voyage basis as and when required. We own or lease approximately 11,500 refrigerated containers, 2,400 dry containers, 4,700 chassis and 3,300 generator sets. In April 2003, we exercised our purchase option on approximately 5,700 refrigerated containers, which previously had been under capital or operating lease, for an aggregate purchase price of approximately \$76.5 million. In October 2003, Dole exercised its option to purchase approximately 940 generator sets at the end of a lease contract for approximately \$3.9 million.

We produce flowers on approximately 1,400 acres in Colombia and Ecuador. We own and operate packing and cooling facilities at each of our flower farms and lease a facility in Bogota, Colombia for bouquet construction.

Asia

We operate a pineapple plantation of approximately 31,000 leased acres in the Philippines. Approximately 20,200 acres of the plantation are leased to us by a cooperative of our employees that acquired the land pursuant to agrarian reform law. The remaining 10,800 acres are leased from individual land owners. A cannery, freezer, juice concentrate plant, a box forming plant, a can manufacturing plant and a fresh fruit packing plant, each owned by us, are located at or near the pineapple plantation.

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We own and operate a multi-fruit cannery, can manufacturing plant and juice concentrate plant located in central Thailand and a second multi fruit cannery in southern Thailand. In Thailand, we grow pineapple on approximately 3,900 acres of leased land.

We operate 18 fresh-cut fruit and vegetable distribution facilities in Japan through joint ventures with local distributors. Three of the distribution centers are located in Tokyo. Through independent growing arrangements, we source products from over 1,200 Japanese farmers. We own produce processing and distribution centers in Shanghai, China and Qingdao, China.

We produce bananas and asparagus from leased lands in the Philippines and also source these products through associated producers or independent growing arrangements in the Philippines. A plastic extruding plant and a box forming plant, all owned by us, are located near the banana plantations. We also operate banana ripening and distribution centers in Hong Kong, South Korea and the Philippines.

Europe

We operate nine banana ripening, produce and flower distribution centers in Sweden, nine in France, five in Spain, four in Italy, one in Belgium, one in Austria and three in Germany; with the exception of two owned facilities in Sweden, six owned facilities in France, three owned facilities in Spain, three owned facilities in Germany and one owned facility in Italy, these facilities are leased. We have a minority interest in a French company that owns a majority interest in banana and pineapple plantations in Cameroon and the Ivory Coast. We own a minority interest in a banana ripening and fruit distribution company with four facilities in the United Kingdom. We are the majority owner in a company operating a port terminal and distribution facility in Livorno, Italy. We own a banana ripening and fruit distribution facility near Istanbul, Turkey.

We have a majority interest in Saba Trading AB, which owns and operates a state-of-the-art, ready-to-eat salad and vegetable plant in Helsingborg, Sweden.

Item 3. *Legal Proceedings*

Dole is involved from time to time in claims and legal actions incidental to its operations, both as plaintiff and defendant. Dole has established what management currently believes to be adequate reserves for pending legal matters. These reserves are established as part of an ongoing worldwide assessment of claims and legal actions that takes into consideration such items as changes in the pending case load (including resolved and new matters), opinions of legal counsel, individual developments in court proceedings, changes in the law, changes in business focus, changes in the litigation environment, changes in opponent strategy and tactics, new developments as a result of ongoing discovery, and past experience in defending and settling similar claims. In the opinion of management, after consultation with outside counsel, the claims or actions to which Dole is a party are not expected to have a material adverse effect, individually or in the aggregate, on Dole's financial condition or results of operations.

A significant portion of Dole's legal exposure relates to lawsuits pending in the United States and in several foreign countries, alleging injury as a result of exposure to the agricultural chemical DBCP (1,2-dibromo-3-chloropropane). DBCP was manufactured by several chemical companies including Dow and Shell and registered by the U.S. government for use on food crops. Dole and other growers applied DBCP on banana farms in Latin America and the Philippines and on pineapple farms in Hawaii. Specific periods of use varied among the different locations. Dole halted all purchases of DBCP, including for use in foreign countries, when the U.S. EPA cancelled the registration of DBCP for use in the United States in 1979. That cancellation was based in part on the apparent link between male sterility and exposure to DBCP among factory workers producing the product in 1977, as well as early product testing done by the manufacturers showing testicular effects on animals exposed to DBCP. To date, there is no reliable evidence demonstrating that field application of DBCP led to sterility among farm workers, although that claim is made in the pending lawsuits. Nor is there any reliable scientific evidence that DBCP causes any other injuries in humans, although plaintiffs in the various actions assert claims based on cancer, birth defects and other general illnesses.

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Currently there are 586 lawsuits, in various stages of proceedings, alleging injury as a result of exposure to DBCP. Eleven of these lawsuits are currently pending in various jurisdictions in the United States, with the remainder pending in Latin America and the Philippines. In the United States, plaintiffs moved to re-open and remand to state court two previously dismissed cases pursuant to the United States Supreme Court's decision in *Dole Food Company, Inc. v. Patrickson*. Those motions were denied in March 2004 by the United States District Court. Plaintiffs have also remanded five other cases to state courts in Texas and Louisiana as a result of the *Patrickson* decision. On January 16, 2004, a case pending in the United States District Court for the District of Hawaii, in which 351 plaintiffs were claiming various injuries as a result of alleged air and water pollution, was resolved without a material adverse effect on Dole's financial condition or results of operations. Claimed damages in DBCP cases worldwide total approximately \$21.7 billion, with the lawsuits in Nicaragua representing approximately 81% of this amount. In almost all of these cases, Dole is a joint defendant with the major DBCP manufacturers and, typically, other banana growers. Except as described below, none of these lawsuits has resulted in a verdict or judgment against Dole.

In Nicaragua, service has been attempted on Dole in 49 of 102 pending cases, with the majority of the lawsuits brought pursuant to Law 364, an October 2000 Nicaraguan statute that contains substantive and procedural provisions that Nicaragua's Attorney General formally opined are unconstitutional. In October 2003, the Supreme Court of Nicaragua issued an advisory opinion, not connected with any litigation, that Law 364 is constitutional. Recently, 216 single plaintiff cases, which were filed with the civil trial court in Chinendega, were dismissed for lack of prosecution.

Seventeen of the 49 cases are being actively litigated in civil trial courts in Managua (8), Chinendega (7) and Puerto Cabezas (2). In all of those cases, Dole has sought or will seek to have the cases returned to the United States pursuant to Law 364. Notwithstanding, the Chinendega court denied Dole's request with respect to the seven cases pending there; and the Managua court denied Dole's request with respect to seven of the eight cases pending there. Dole's request as to the eighth Managua case is still pending. The Puerto Cabezas court has not yet ruled on Dole's request with respect to the two cases pending there. On February 25, 2004, the Managua court entered a judgment against Dole, Dow and Shell in one of the eight cases, awarding 58 of the 81 claimants \$82.9 million.

Nine of the 49 cases had been consolidated into one case before a civil trial court in Managua, with the plaintiffs naming an entity denominated as Dole Food Corporation Inc. as a defendant. Dole is aware of no legal entity bearing that name, and Dole is certain that no such legal entity is related to Dole. As a result, Dole responded in those nine consolidated cases on behalf of Dole Fresh Fruit Company, a subsidiary of Dole, which has been named as a defendant in other pending DBCP matters, including matters brought by Nicaraguan citizens. Dole paid the \$100,000 deposit to the Nicaraguan court, as required under Law 364, to participate in that litigation. On October 25, 2002, the Managua court issued a ruling that Dole Fresh Fruit Company was not a party to the nine consolidated cases. Thereafter, counsel for Dole Fresh Fruit Company notified the Managua court that no legal entity known as Dole Food Corporation Inc. exists and sought to appear on behalf of Dole Food Company, Inc. and to ratify all prior pleadings of Dole Fresh Fruit Company. On November 25, 2002, the Managua court issued a ruling that Dole Food Company, Inc. is not a defendant in the nine consolidated cases. On December 13, 2002, the Managua court entered a judgment in the aggregate amount of \$489.4 million on behalf of 468 plaintiffs against Dow Chemical Company, also known as Dow AgroSciences, Shell Chemical Company, Standard Fruit and Vegetable Company and Dole Food Corporation Inc. in the nine consolidated actions. Because the Managua court had held that Dole was not a defendant in the case, the court also ordered that Dole's \$100,000 deposit be returned. Standard Fruit and Vegetable Company is a Texas corporation that is wholly unrelated to Dole. On May 14, 2003, an action was filed in Los Angeles County Superior Court against The Dow Chemical Company, Shell Chemical Company, and Dole Food Company, Inc. to enforce the Nicaraguan judgment. On July 18, 2003, Dole filed a motion to dismiss the enforcement action on the grounds that Dole Food Company, Inc. was not a party to the judgment. On July 17, 2003, Dow and Shell filed a motion to remove the enforcement action to the United States District Court for the Central District of California. Dole consented to that removal. On October 20, 2003, the United States District Court for the Central District of California dismissed with prejudice the enforcement action as to all of the defendants, including Dole. The Court held that Dole Food Company, Inc. was not a

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party in the Nicaraguan judgment. The plaintiffs have appealed the District Court's dismissal to the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit. That appeal is currently pending.

Dole believes that none of the Nicaraguan civ