

Global aquatic trade - Metadata

Author: FAO-NFISI

01) Title

Global aquatic trade - Metadata

02) Data source information

Compiling Organization

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

Data source

https://www.fao.org/fishery/en/collection/global_commodity_prod

03) Contact

Contact organization

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

Contact organization unit

Statistics and Information Team (NFISI) of the FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Division (NFI)

Contact mail address

Viale delle Terme di Caracalla, 00153 Rome, Italy

Contact email address

Fish-Statistics-Inquiries@fao.org

04) Update date

Metadata last posted

30-06-26

Metadata last update

30-06-26

05) Statistical presentation

Data description

This dataset covers annual international trade of aquatic products in volume and value terms from 1976. Data cover all aquatic products, including aquatic animal products (fish, crustaceans, molluscs, etc. . .), aquatic

plants (seaweed and other algae), and other aquatic animals and products (shells, corals, pearls and sponges), with the exception of data on aquatic mammals, reptiles, amphibians, and turtles.

The global aquatic trade data is collected and processed by FAO and refers to the volume and value of aquatic products imported, exported and re-exported annually by all the countries in the world.

Trade data is directly obtained, at the most detailed level, from United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD), Eurostat for European Union countries, and other national authorities as needed. When available, data on aquatic products landed abroad by domestic vessels is added. The data is checked for outliers. Non-reporting countries and missing cells are imputed by FAO mainly using trade partner data (i.e. mirror data) in the absence of other information.

Coverage

Imports, exports, and re-exports at country level, disaggregated by over 1000 aquatic products according to the International Standard Statistical Classification of Fishery Commodities (ISSCFC). The ISSCFC is an expansion of the United Nations Standard International Trade Classification, Revision 4 (SITC Rev.4) and is linked with the Harmonized System (HS) of the World Customs Organization.

The scope of aquatic trade includes all tariff line codes (or Combined Nomenclature (CN) codes for European Union countries) starting with the following HS (or CN) codes: 03 (excluding 030760), 0508, 0509, 051191, 051199 only if there is a further breakdown related to aquatic products only, 12122, 130231, 1504, 1604, 1605 (excluding 160558), 210390 only if there is a further breakdown related to aquatic products, 230120, and 230990 only if there is a further breakdown related to aquatic products only.

Data is available for 225 reporting countries, territories and areas of the world based on the United Nations [Standard Country or Area Codes for Statistical Use](#). From 2019 onward, the data is also disaggregated by partner country.

Sector coverage

Fisheries and aquaculture

Statistical concepts and definitions

Data on trade of aquatic products are usually collected by national statistical authorities largely complying with the United Nations International Merchandise Trade Statistics (IMTS) Concepts and definitions (2010) which provides the global standard for compiling and reporting international trade in goods. It recommends that all goods which add to or subtract from the stock of material resources of a country, by entering (imports) or leaving (exports) its economic territory, be recorded in international merchandise trade statistics. In accordance with the internationally recommended practice, import statistics include aquatic species caught by foreign fishing craft, whether or not processed on board, landed in domestic ports. Similarly, export statistics include aquatic species caught by domestic fishing craft, whether or not processed on board, landed in foreign ports.

The IMTS also distinguishes between general trade and special trade systems, which differ mainly in the way warehoused and re-exported goods are recorded. More information can be found at: [https://unstats.un.org/unsd/trade/eg-imts/IMTS%202010%20\(English\).pdf](https://unstats.un.org/unsd/trade/eg-imts/IMTS%202010%20(English).pdf)

Information on the trade system applied by individual countries can be found in the UNSD publications notes: <https://comtradeplus.un.org/PublicationNotes>.

Reference area

The list of countries and the geographical classification are primarily based on the UN [Standard Country or Area Codes for Statistical use](#).

The term “country” or “country or area” as used in the dataset also covers territories, cities and land areas, as well as provinces, districts, enclaves and other parts of territories or combinations of countries or areas such

as economic or customs unions. Country or area names and designations are subject to nationally announced changes. Name changes announced recently may not have been incorporated in this dataset release but will be reflected in future ones. The designations employed and the presentation of material in this dataset do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of FAO concerning the legal or development status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

Time coverage

Data aggregated for all partners is available from 1976 to 2024, while data disaggregated by partner is available from 2019 to 2024.

Base period

Not applicable

06) Unit of measure

Import, export and re-export quantities are expressed in metric tonnes (1000 kilograms) and refer to the net product weight, that is, the weight of the goods excluding any container and any liquid added for preservation or flavour.

Import, export, and re-export values are expressed in thousand US dollars. Export and re-export values are generally reported on a FOB (free on board) basis, meaning the value of the goods plus the value of the services performed to deliver the goods to the border of the exporting country. Import values are generally reported on a CIF (Cost Insurance and Freight) basis, which includes the value of the goods, plus the value of the services performed to deliver goods to the border of the exporting country, plus the value of the services performed to deliver the goods from the border of the exporting country to the border of the importing country. However, it should be noted that some countries or areas apply different valuation practices and may deviate from this standard approach. Detailed information on the valuation implemented by countries is available at the UNSD publication notes: <https://comtradeplus.un.org/PublicationNotes>.

07) Reference period

The annual period used is the calendar year (1 January - 31 December) except for the following countries which report data on a split-year basis as indicated: AUSTRALIA - Year ending 30 June (up to 2002; from 1998 only imports), ESWATINI - Year beginning April (from 2002 to 2007), GAMBIA - Year ending 30 June (from 2002 to 2013), MICRONESIA - Year ending 30 September (up to 2001), NEW ZEALAND - Year ending 30 June (only 2002).

Split-year data are shown under the calendar years in which the split-years end.

08) Institutional mandate

Legal acts and other agreements

Article I of the FAO Constitution requires the Organization to collect, analyze, interpret and disseminate information relating to nutrition, food and agriculture (FAO, 1945).

Data acquisition and data transmission

Countries and territories have primary responsibility for trade data collection. FAO sources trade data from UNSD, Eurostat, and other national authorities as needed. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the UNSD covers the implementation of the IMTS framework and a data exchange. In addition, a mutual agreement with Eurostat includes data sharing.

09) Confidentiality

Confidentiality - policy

FAO data and statistics are produced in accordance with FAO Policy on Data Protection and the implementation modalities of FAO SDQAF Principle 4 on Data protection and Statistical Confidentiality.

Confidentiality - data treatment

Data is disseminated according to the confidentiality recommendations formulated by the IMTS compiler manual. If any, confidential data are not disseminated by FAO as such.

Privacy

Not applicable

10) Release policy

Release calendar

FAO FishStat data releases follow a release calendar available publicly at the main FAO FishStat page at <https://www.fao.org/fishery/en/fishstat>. Global aquatic trade data for the most recent available year are disseminated annually in June.

Release calendar access

<https://www.fao.org/fishery/services/storage/fs/fishery/documents/fishstat/FishStatReleaseCalendar.pdf>

User access

This data domain is disseminated according to FAO's Open Data Licensing for Statistical Databases Policy, under the [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license \(CC-BY 4.0\)](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) and are subject to [FAO Statistical Database Terms of Use](#).

FAO declines all responsibility for errors or deficiencies in the database or software or in the documentation accompanying it, for program maintenance and upgrading as well as for any damage that may arise from them. FAO also declines any responsibility for updating the data and assumes no responsibility for errors and omissions in the data provided. Users are, however, kindly asked to report any errors or deficiencies in this product to FAO.

Open data license

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

11) Frequency of dissemination

Yearly

12) Accessibility and clarity

News release

Not applicable

Publications

[FAO Fishery and Aquaculture Statistical Yearbook](#)

Online database

https://www.fao.org/fishery/en/collection/global_commodity_prod

Micro-data access

Not applicable

Other formats

This dataset can be consulted through different tools and formats accessible at https://www.fao.org/fishery/en/collection/global_commodity_prod

Documentation on methodology

Information on the methodology followed is available in the Annex 2 “Methodological notes and glossary” of the [FAO Yearbook Fishery and Aquaculture Statistics](#).

13) Relevance

User needs

The main users are FAO analysts, other international organizations, ministries and government agencies, agro-industry, trade and professional associations, research institutes and universities, journalists and the general public. According to the 2023 FishStat database user consultation, researchers are the largest user group, accounting for almost 32 percent of the total respondents, followed by students and educators, which accounted for around 25 percent of the overall respondents, while users from private companies represent a share of 15 percent. The objectives of these users vary, but aquatic trade statistics are especially useful for market monitoring, and policy-making in the sector. FAO is not aware of unmet needs. Users are encouraged to contact the dataset owner for resolving more specific queries that are not addressed elsewhere in these metadata.

User satisfaction

The latest quality review is the FishStat database user consultation which took place during July-December 2023. About 93 percent of returning users agreed that the FishStat database was adequate for their purpose. As for compliance of the data with the FAO SDQAF quality dimensions, the overall percentage of satisfied responses was about 81 percent, while the percentage of fully satisfied users simultaneously across all the 5 quality dimensions was 53 percent. The percentage of fully satisfied users is defined as the share of respondents who selected “agree” or “strongly agree” simultaneously across all the different 5 SDQAF dimensions.

Completeness

The availability of official data reported by countries varies widely. Whenever national offices fail to report their aquatic trade data, FAO imputes it in order to create a comprehensive global dataset. These estimates enable meaningful aggregates at the global, regional and national levels. In 2025, 61 percent of all countries included in FAO Global aquatic trade dataset had reported their trade data, while the remaining 39 percent were non-reporting countries. The aquatic trade data of non-reporting countries get estimated by FAO mainly using trade partner information (i.e. mirror data), resulting in a comprehensive country coverage.

14) Accuracy and reliability

Overall accuracy

The share of imputed data, including through mirroring, was about 3.4 percent of the total value of imports of aquatic products in 2024. Quality of the data varies according to the country, in particular in reference to the granularity of the detail by aquatic product.

Model assumption error

Not applicable

Imputation indicators

Imputation rate (including mirror data): 3.4 percent in 2024.

Data revision - policy

If a country did not initially report its trade data and FAO had to impute it, those estimates are replaced with the country's official data in the next data release. If a country that initially reported its trade data later issues significant revisions, the revised data are used to replace the previously published figures.

Data revision - practice

Countries revise their official statistics regularly for past periods. FAO imputation may also be revised on the basis of more accurate information. When such revisions occur, historical data are revised accordingly. Therefore, users are advised to refrain from comparing data published in previous releases with the latest release.

15) Timeliness and punctuality

Timeliness

Data are normally disseminated within 18 months after the reference year.

Punctuality

The release is according to the schedule of the calendar.

16) Coherence and comparability

Comparability - geographical

In general, data are broadly comparable across geographical areas, countries, and regions. However, differences in national data collection methods, and coverage may affect the degree of comparability, except for regions where countries are bound by regulations mandating harmonized methods, such as European Union countries. Discrepancies between total exports and total imports of a given product may be due to several factors, including the time lapse between the dispatch of goods from the exporting country and their arrival in the importing country; the use of a different classification of the same product by different countries; or variations in trade systems, with some countries reporting under the general trade system and others under the special trade system.

Comparability - over time

Given the length of the time series, starting from 1976, full comparability across all years cannot be guaranteed. However, for shorter time periods, reasonably good comparability over time can be expected. Detailed information on data variations and methodological changes is provided in the country notes, available in the Global aquatic trade workspace in FishStatJ.

Coherence

Cross-domain coherence: Aquatic trade data have a high cross-domain coherence, as they are used alongside primary and processed production in the compilation of food balance sheets. This integration within a single supply and utilization framework provides an additional validation of the data. Moreover, aquatic trade data are coherent with FAO crops and livestock trade data as they are based on the HS classification.

Internal coherence: It is expected that the internal coherence is checked by countries before dissemination.

Classification system

For aquatic products: [FAO International Standard Statistical Classification of Fishery Commodities \(ISSCFC\)](#):. Data can also be expressed in a number of other classifications, including:

- [HS \(Version 2022\)](#)
- [CPC \(Version 2.1\)](#)
- [SITC \(Revision 4\)](#)
- [ISSCAAP](#)

For geographical reporting and partner areas:

- [UN Standard Country or Area Codes for Statistical Use](#)
- [Least Developed Countries \(LDC\) \(version 2024\)](#)
- [Low-Income Food-Deficit Countries \(LIFDCs\) \(2026 revision\)](#)
- [Landlocked Developing Countries \(LLDCs\)](#)
- [Small Island Developing States \(SIDS\)](#)
- [Net Food-Importing Developing Countries \(NFIDC\) \(2024 revision\)](#)
- [The classification of the World Bank by income \(2026 revision\)](#).

For observation status codes (flag): “[FAO Statistical Standard Series Observation Status Code List](#)”. The flags used are aligned with the SDMX standard and are listed below along with their descriptions:

- ” A ” = Official value (previously displayed without any symbol associated);
- ” B ” = Time series break;
- ” E ” = Estimated value;
- ” F ” = Forecast value;
- ” G ” = Experimental value;
- ” I ” = Value imputed by a receiving agency (FAO) (previously displayed as ” E “);
- ” P ” = Provisional value;
- ” S ” = Strike and other special events;
- ” U ” = Low reliability;
- ” V ” = Unvalidated value;
- ” X ” = Value from international/mandated organization;

Flags associated to value ” 0 “:

- ” L ” = Missing value; data exist but were not collected;
- ” M ” = Missing value; data cannot exist;
- ” N ” = Not significant (more than zero but less than half the unit used);
- ” O ” = Missing value; cannot be determined;
- ” Q ” = Missing value; suppressed.

Mirror statistics, which are the data derived from the other reporting countries’ data, are flagged as X since 2019, while for older years they are flagged as I.

17) Statistical process

Source data

The main source of data is official country statistics compiled by UNSD (Comtrade) and Eurostat. These data are collected by FAO at the most detailed level as possible (tariff line for Comtrade and Combined Nomenclature for Eurostat). The national detail is then mapped to the ISSCFC of FAO. The source of national data can originate from surveys, administrative data, customs agencies and estimates based on expert observations. Additional sources include national web databases and national or international publications, which are used particularly to update data on landings abroad, information that is sometimes excluded from commercial trade records and therefore not always captured in UNSD data. A limited number of countries also provide data through the FAO questionnaire (FISHSTAT FTR), which is sent annually by email to national reporting offices. In cases where no official data are available, values are imputed primarily using trade partner (mirror) data. All such instances are clearly indicated using conventional flags.

Frequency of data collection and acquisition

Yearly

Data collection method

Aquatic trade data, at tariff line level, is retrieved through APIs provided by UNSD and EUROSTAT.

Data validation

The data received at the tariff line level are aggregated at the reporting country, partner country, flow, year and tariff line levels. Products are then mapped to the ISSCFC. Missing quantities are imputed using information on the unit value from the closest donor. Outliers are detected and corrected using multiple techniques in compliance with the [FAO Standards on Data Editing and Validation](#). Data consistency checks are performed against historical data and primary production data, and non-reporting countries data are imputed through mirroring.

Data compilation

FAO is responsible for compiling the data and generating aggregates.

Regional aggregation

FAO produces global, regional and sub-regional aggregates, in line with the [FAO Statistical Standard Series on Data aggregation](#).

Adjustment

Countries are responsible for the quality of the data they report. FAO reviews and validates the data and, when necessary, applies corrections.

Imputation

Imputations are made according to the [FAO Statistical Standard Series - Imputation \(2019\)](#).

18) Quality management

Quality assurance

FAO is responsible for the quality of the internal statistical processes used to compile the published datasets. The [FAO Statistics and Data Quality Assurance Framework \(SDQAF\)](#), provides the necessary principles, guidelines and tools to carry out quality assessments. FAO is performing an internal bi-annual survey (FAO Quality Assessment and Planning Survey) designed to gather information on all of FAO's statistical

activities, notably to assess the extent to which quality standards are being implemented with a view to increasing compliance with the quality dimensions of SDQAF, documenting best practices and prepare quality improvement plans, where necessary. Domain-specific quality assurance activities are carried out systematically (e.g. quality reviews, self-assessments, compliance monitoring).

Quality assessment

The quality of the FAO statistics is highly dependent upon the accuracy and reliability of the data collected and provided by countries. FAO strives to validate and ensure the quality of the official data received by validating and cross checking them. FAO also works with countries to revise their data when appropriate to ensure consistency in the dissemination of official data.

According to the 2025 Quality Assessment and Planning Survey (QAPS) of FAO, aquatic trade data domain reported a quality score of 0.95. According to the QAPS a statistical output is considered of good quality when it reaches a quality score of 0.6 or above.

19) Recommended uses and limitations

Not applicable

20) Comment

Data for countries that belonged to the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (former USSR) are available as a single aggregate until 1991.

For statistical purposes, the data for the People's Republic of China do not include China, Hong Kong SAR, China, Macao SAR and Taiwan Province of China, which are presented separately. Therefore, "China" refers to China's mainland only.

Detailed country or area notes are available inside the global aquatic trade workspace in FishStatJ.