

The EU has become the first seafood product importer

A report released by the European Commission confirms the European Union (EU) is the seafood product largest importer and a major consumption market, representing 24 per cent of the total value of world trade.

This has been stated in report *The EU fish Market 2014*, available in four languages - English, French, German and Spanish --, which is one of the services of the European Market Observatory for Fishery and Aquaculture (EUMOFA).

The document for the first time confers a complete overview of consumption, trade and production of fish and aquaculture in the EU, describing how much and what type of fish is consumed in the EU, where it comes from and how much is caught in the wild or produced from aquaculture.

The report remarks that despite the EU market's global strength following a strong period of growth in consumption in the last decade, consumption dropped by 5 per cent between 2008 and 2010 and has since remained stable.

Seafood consumption varies a lot from one Member State to the other. Northern Member States are more focused on processed fish while Southern Member States still favour fresh products and devote a larger part of household expenditures to fish. Central and Eastern European countries are below the EU average but register increase in consumption.

It also outlines that trade between EU countries is very significant and plays an essential role in the EU's fishery trade.

Besides, it stresses that three out of four fish consumed in the EU comes from wild fishing whilst consumption of farmed products decreased by 5 per cent in 2011 and that EU self-sufficiency for seafood remained stable at around 45 per cent between 2008 and 2011.

This data could be a consequence of reduced EU aquaculture production and diminished imports of farmed products in particular pangasius.

The shrimp is now the leading species imported in terms of value, ahead of salmon and cod whilst tuna, cod, salmon and pollock are now the main species consumed in the EU.

According to the report, Norway and China are the main EU suppliers. Norway showed significant increases in volumes of seafood products exported to the EU – mainly salmon and cod. China confirms its leading role as a processing country for white fish. Shrimp imports (mainly destined to Spain) boosted by 20 per cent between 2011 and 2012, after a three-year decrease.

The analysis reveals that EU self-sufficiency for seafood remained stable at around 45 per cent between 2008 and 2011 and that the EU percentage of production of the world total has been steadily declining since 2005.

As a matter of fact, the EU occupies fifth place in the fish production ranking after China, Indonesia, India and Peru.

And when it comes to expenditure for purchasing fish products, the EU occupies first place.

The EU covers its domestic consumption mostly through imports, the majority of which are either frozen or prepared products. Shrimp, tuna, white fish and fishmeal are the most imported products.

Source : <http://fis.com/fis/worldnews/worldnews.asp?l=e&ndb=1&id=67768> (10/04/2014)