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**Report Name:** Strong Growth in US Fish Exports to Germany

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**Report Highlights:**

Germany is the most important fish and seafood market in Europe for U.S. exporters. Germany's growing demand for high-quality fish and seafood offers opportunities for U.S. suppliers. U.S. sales to Germany increased by 19% to nearly \$222 million in 2019. The German market is especially dependent on imports of Alaska pollock and there are also good prospects for salmon, hake, cod, scallops, and dogfish among others. This report provides information about U.S. exports, market entry, import requirements, as well as trade and market data.

## **I. Market**

Demand for fish and seafood in Germany continue to increase. Consumption in Germany averages 14 kg/per capita annually. Sales reached a record high of €3.9 billion (\$4.2 USD) in 2018. Total domestic demand is more than seven times higher than domestic production. Distribution of fish and fishery products in Germany in 2018 was 2.2 million metric tons (MMT). Imports reached 1.9 MMT supplemented by domestic production of 0.3 Mio. MT. Alaska pollock has overtaken salmon as the favorite fish followed by tuna, herring, shrimp and trout. These six species make up for roughly 75% of the total amount of fish and seafood consumed in Germany.

There is general upward potential for fish and seafood products in Germany – not just for the leading species. In general, pricing level in Germany for fish and seafood is low due to the dominant position of the discounters in the retail food sector and even more in fish sales. Nevertheless, there is still a strong segment of upscale retailers and consumers willing to spend more on quality food products. Younger and affluent consumers tend to purchase quality instead of looking for the best prices. With the ongoing trends for sustainable, healthy foods and new protein sources, forecasts for the fish and seafood sector in Germany are promising. This applies both for the low price and upscale market.

## **II. Trade**

The demand for fish and seafood in Germany exceeds domestic supply. Most imports come from other EU countries with the neighboring countries Poland, Denmark, and the Netherlands as leading suppliers. Total imports decreased by 5% to \$5.6 billion in 2019 with Pacific and Atlantic salmon, Tuna, Alaska pollock, shrimp, and cod as the most important import products. U.S. exports increased by nearly 20% to \$222 million in 2019 backed by strong sales of Alaska pollock and Sockeye salmon. In 2019, the US ranked second among third country origins behind China, followed by Norway and Vietnam.

| <b>Germany Imports of Fish and Seafood by Origin in Value (\$ Million)</b> |             |             |             |             |             |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| <b>Partner Country</b>   | <b>2015</b> | <b>2016</b> | <b>2017</b> | <b>2018</b> | <b>2019</b> |
| World  | 4,945       | 5,411       | 5,653       | 5,875       | 5,565       |
| Poland   | 871         | 976         | 1,062       | 1,204       | 1,126       |
| Netherlands  | 704         | 758         | 798         | 875         | 775         |
| Denmark  | 609         | 713         | 716         | 664         | 643         |
| China  | 395         | 401         | 368         | 394         | 493         |
| Lithuania  | 150         | 199         | 222         | 214         | 226         |
| United States  | 188         | 198         | 211         | 186         | 222         |
| Sweden   | 131         | 191         | 184         | 190         | 218         |
| Norway   | 267         | 316         | 261         | 266         | 203         |
| Vietnam  | 178         | 156         | 165         | 169         | 165         |
| France   | 116         | 120         | 140         | 156         | 147         |

Source of Data: Trade Data Monitor

Germany is also a large exporter and especially re-exporter of fish and seafood products since domestic production is small. Exports were valued over \$2,4 billion in 2019. Top destinations were EU countries like Netherlands, France, and Austria. The United States ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> after Switzerland among non EU countries. German exports to the United States totaled \$0.1 billion in 2019 which was mostly salmon – chilled and frozen.

### **III. U.S. Exports**

Germany is traditionally the most important fish and seafood market for U.S. exporters in Europe. Globally, it ranks sixth among U.S. export markets after China, Japan, Canada, South Korea, and the neighboring Netherlands. The German market is especially dependent on imports of Alaska pollock since it is the main EU producer and exporter of Alaska pollock fish fingers. Share of Alaska Pollock at total U.S. fish and seafood exports is usually close to 60%. While Alaska pollock exports increased by 18% in 2019, share dropped to 52% in 2019 due to strong exports of Sockeye salmon (+76%) and hake (+79%) to Germany while sales of Pacific salmon stayed flat. There are also good prospects for cod, scallops, and dogfish among others on the German market.

Promoting Alaska pollock in Germany has recently become a challenge since it is not an identification of origin but a product name in Germany. This leads to confusion among consumers, because pollock from the Atlantic (*Pollachius virens*) from Russia or the double frozen product from China is also market by that name. Nevertheless, consumers associate the origin with the name and think that the lower quality products are originated in Alaska, too. Thus, sharing information about the origin FAO 67 for “true” Alaska pollock and differences between single and double frozen Alaska pollock is important.

Germany's growing demand for high-quality fish and seafood offers opportunities for U.S. suppliers. In general, the US is an accepted and well-known producer of fish and seafood and the US is able to supply seafood in most price ranges. Salmon and Alaska pollock, two of the strongest species of U.S. fisheries are among the most demanded food fish in Germany. Especially companies from Alaska can take advantage of the growing demand for sustainability in the fish and seafood market. By promoting Alaska's key attributes wild, natural, sustainable, it meets the current trends in the German market.

#### **IV. Distribution**

Germany is located in the heart of Europe and German importers and distributors supply other European markets. The German retail food market is characterized by consolidation, market saturation, strong competition and low prices with discounter as the leading channel. When it comes to sales of fish and seafood, discounters are even stronger. Lidl and Aldi are the leading discounters which offer a wide range of branded fish and seafood products and own gourmet lines besides the basic private label portfolio. For more information on the German retail sector please see [German retail report](#).



The number one selling argument for fish and seafood in Germany is the seal from the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC). In retail, the logo counts as the main selling point and is seen as most reliable by the majority of customers. Due to this consumer behavior, there are some retailers that are not willing to list products without MSC certification. Please see image above and check [MSC](#) website for more information.