

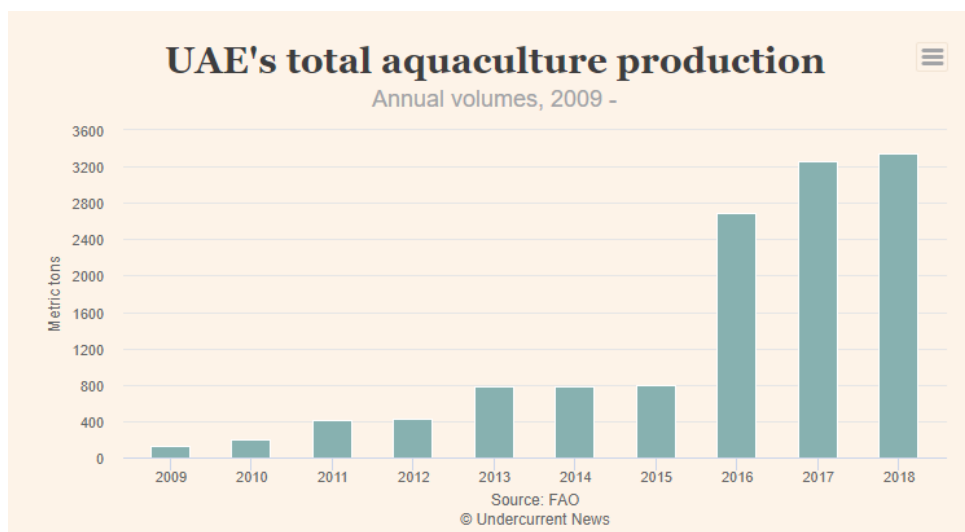


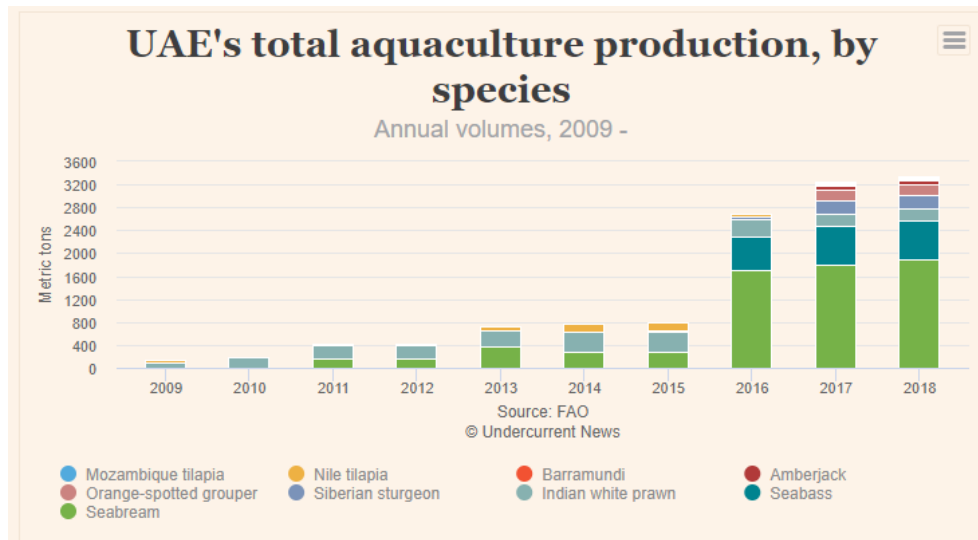
## UAE's fish, seafood production set to grow by 4.7% annually until 2025

The United Arab Emirates (UAE)'s fish and seafood production is predicted to grow at a compound annual growth rate of 4.7% between 2020 and 2025, said Wuraola Ogundimu, trade manager in food, beverage and retail products at the British Centres For Business in the UAE and the Middle East, on a recent webinar.

In 2019, production grew by 4%, she said, which means the UAE's total aquaculture production came to around 3,500 metric tons, up from 2018's production of 3,255t, according to data from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

Thus, it is expected that the UAE's total production of fish and seafood should reach around 4,600t in 2025 based on calculations. Albeit modest, this is a significant increase from less than a decade ago, when the total production was under 500t, as the chart below shows.





As at least 70% of fish and seafood that is consumed in the UAE is imported, "this leaves a big scope for new investments and shows the great potential the UAE seafood market has," Ogundimu said on Nov. 18 during Seafish's second export market webinar named "The Seafood Market in the UAE".

Thus, the government is currently focused on increasing fish farming projects to improve the region's food security, which is an issue of major importance, she also explained.

"Lately, authorities have been investing a lot in aquaculture and seafood farming locally, but this is just not enough. The demand is growing steadily, and the UAE is the largest consumer of fish in the Gulf Cooperation Council market with a per capita consumption estimated at 28.6 kilograms per year."

### Growth drivers and trends

The current population of the UAE is 9.89 million people, based on the latest United Nations data, and is also set to grow in the coming years, "as the UAE tends to attract more and more young people with high disposable incomes and an appetite for better food," Ogundimu said.



Thus, the demand for organic fish and seafood will continue to grow, she added, as people in the country are also increasingly seeking convenient food options for their busy lifestyles and organic variants when shopping for these products.

"We have become more conscious and are trying to eat more healthy here too, which has consequently driven the demand for organic products significantly up in the last few years, as has tourism," she explained.

In addition, there is a trend for value-added and frozen products, "which will grow further, even though at first consumers were reluctant to eat them," she added. "People are becoming more and more confident when it comes to frozen fish as they realized it is as fresh as the day it was frozen."

According to the FAO, imports of high-value seafood products such as scallops, shrimp, lobsters, and caviar to the UAE have increased as a result of both the growing economy and the tourism sector.

In addition, crustaceans were the most dynamic performer in 2019 with total volume growth of 5%, and the consumption of these species is set to continue growing during the next decade, according to Ogundimu.

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