CBI Product Factsheet:

Frozen cultured Vannamei shrimp in Europe
**Introduction**

The whiteleg shrimp, often called Vannamei (*Litopenaeus vannamei*) is one of the most popular cultured shrimp species in the world. Europe will offer good opportunities to Vannamei shrimp exporters in the next few years as the demand for cheaper shrimps, such as Vannamei shrimps, is expected to increase at the expense of black tiger shrimp imports.

**Product description**

The whiteleg shrimp (*Litopenaeus vannamei*) is part of the Penaeidae family. Other species in this family are *P. setiferus* (Atlantic white shrimps) and *P. indicus* (Indian prawn). Female prawns can reach sizes of 23 centimetres. Female prawns weighing around 30-45 grams will spawn 100,000-250,000 eggs. The following HS codes for shrimp are applied in this product fact sheet:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HS code</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>030613</td>
<td>Frozen shrimps and prawns</td>
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<tr>
<td>030617</td>
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<tr>
<td>160520</td>
<td>Shrimps and prawns</td>
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<tr>
<td>160521</td>
<td>Shrimps and prawns, not in airtight containers</td>
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<tr>
<td>160529</td>
<td>Shrimps and prawns, in airtight containers</td>
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**Product specification**

This section provides you with basic information about product specifications and import requirements in the EU, which is based on EU legislation. Important legislation is the recently renewed Common Organisation of the Market, which contains the rules of the organisation of the market for fishery and aquaculture products in the EU. Legislation about how to inform EU consumers about fishery and aquaculture products is also relevant to you. Below, you can find more specific information about the labelling, packaging, and processing of Vannamei shrimps for the European market.

**Labelling:**

The contents of labelling must be provided in the language of the country where the product is exported to. When importing fishery and aquaculture products into the EU, the following information must be provided on the labelling or packaging of the fishery product, or by means of a commercial document accompanying the goods:

- The name of the product: The commercial and scientific name of the species. For this purpose, Member States publish a list of the commercial and scientific names accepted in its territory;
- Production method: In the case of the Vannamei shrimps, it must be mentioned that it is a cultured product;
- Origin: In the case of the Vannamei shrimps, reference the country where they are produced;
- Presentation: It must be mentioned how the product is processed (whole, which is Head On Shell On (HOSO), shell on (SO), peeled tail on (PTO), peeled undeveined (PUD) or peeled and deveined (P&D), tail-on, butterflied);
- Net Weight: The net weight must be mentioned on pre-packed products;
- Date of minimum durability: Consisting of day, month, and year, in that order and preceded by the words "best before" or "best before end" or the "use by" date;
- EU seller: The name or business name and address of the manufacturer, packager or seller established in the EU;
- The package must contain an EU approval number;
- The packaging must also contain a lot number;
- Nutrition: Ingredients and nutrition must be mentioned;

Each EU member state has a competent authority that is responsible for the implementation of EU regulation with respect to labelling.

**Packaging:**

Packaging requirements differ widely between customers and market segments. Therefore, it is crucial that you discuss your customers’ preferred packaging requirements. Some general characteristics are:

- Frozen Vannamei shrimps are mostly imported in cartons or bags with a certain amount of prawns in it (for example, 30/40, 40/50, 50/60, etcetera, pcs/kg);
- B2B frozen Vannamei shrimps are often imported as 5 to 25 kg bulk, and also as 1-5 kg block frozen.

1 Contains all frozen, peeled and unpeeled, raw and steamed black tiger shrimps and peeled boiled black tiger shrimps.
2 Frozen cooked unpeeled shrimps and value-added shrimps (like skewers, spies, and marinated shrimps.)
Processing and colour:

- Colour:
  - Raw: Translucent, bluish or olive with dusky bands, and characteristic white legs. Translucent white bluish peeled meat.
  - Cooked: Bright red shell and white meat.
- Preferred processing depends from country to country: presentation types: whole (HOSO), but also shell on (SO), peeled tail on (PTO), peeled undeveined (PUD) or peeled and deveined (P&D) and tail-on. In the south of Europe, raw HOSO shrimps are preferred for the cooking industry. In northern Europe, retail PUD shrimps are popular.
- In the EU, the Vannamei shrimps are measured by pieces per kilogram (pc/kg). For Europe, around 40-50 pc/kg and 50-60 pc/kg are preferred.
- Glazing: Usually 10% declared on packaging.

What is the demand for cultured Vannamei shrimp in Europe?

General information and figures about production and trade developments in Europe are provided in CBI Trade Statistics. This section provides you with more detailed statistics of shrimp trade and consumption in Europe.

Imports of frozen vannamei shrimps

The most important export countries for Vannamei shrimps are Thailand, Ecuador, Indonesia, India, and Vietnam. While Vannamei shrimps account for approximately 100% of total shrimp exports in Ecuador, the contribution of Vannamei shrimp exports in the other countries is on the rise.

Northern European countries (Netherlands, Germany, and Belgium) mainly import their shrimps from the countries that produce both black tiger shrimps and Vannamei shrimps. Spain, France, and Italy import mainly Vannamei shrimps from countries that mostly produce Vannamei shrimp.

Vannamei shrimps account for nearly 100% of Ecuador’s shrimp production. For Spain, France, and Italy, the import of shrimp from Ecuador makes up a substantial part of the shrimp imports.

Imports of frozen shrimps

Note that the data in Figure 2 and Figure 3 cover not only Vannamei but also Monodon shrimps.

![Figure 2: EU import value of frozen shrimps and prawns (HS 030617) for 2014 (euro x million)](source)

![Figure 3: EU import price per kg of frozen shrimps and prawns (HS 030617) for 2012-2014 (euro/kg)](source)

Source: Trademap  
Source: Trademap

In 2014, the total value of imports of frozen shrimps and prawns\(^3\) (excluding cold-water shrimps and prawns) to the EU amounted to €3.7 billion ($13,000 tons). This represented 29% of global import value (31% import volume) for this group in 2014.

Compared with 2013, the total import value in 2014 rose by 23%, while import quantities increased by only 7%. The global supply crisis caused by Early Mortality Syndrome (EMS) resulted in this price increase of shrimps all over the world.

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\(^3\) Smoked frozen shrimps or prawns, shrimps of species Parapenaeus longirostris, genus Penaeus, family Pandalidae without genus Pandalus, genus Crangon without species Crangon crangon
The top 7 importers, i.e. Spain, France, Italy, the UK, Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands, together account for nearly 90% (£3.3 billion) of the total frozen shrimp and prawn import value in Europe.

The top 3 suppliers, i.e. Ecuador, India and Argentina, account for more than 55% of EU imports.

Figure 3 shows the average shrimp price for the 7 main EU countries importing shrimps. The difference in average shrimp price between southern Europe (Spain, Italy, and France) and northern Europe (Belgium, UK, Germany, and the Netherlands) in 2014 was €1.83. Countries like Spain, Italy, and France import cheaper raw material, mostly HOSO, as a source for their domestic shrimp cookeries, while northern Europe imports more cooked or peeled shrimps. The average import price in Europe in 2014 was €7.3, which was higher than the €6.4 in 2013 because of the global supply shortage caused by the EMS outbreak.

In 2015, prices of vannamei shrimp and black tiger shrimp have returned to relatively normal levels after rapid increases and historically high prices in 2013 and 2014. The first reason was the outbreak of the Early Mortality Syndrome in many vannamei-producing countries, resulting in a global supply shortage and competition for the raw material. The second reason concerned problems with Chinese production, which led to increasing competition for raw material. As a result, prices for vannamei shrimp increased sharply. In early 2014, the prices started to stabilise. This was due to several strategies to reduce EMS crop failures and due to increased production in India and Indonesia.

Thailand used to be the main supplier of value-added frozen shrimp products to Europe. However, its share declined drastically in 2014 as the country lost its GSP preferential tariff status in January 2015 (and tariffs had already increased in stages during 2014)⁴. Thailand’s exports of frozen preserved and prepared shrimps dropped from 18,000 tons in 2013 to 7,300 tons in 2014 (from €159 million to €80 million in value). Vietnam took over a large share (+5,500 tons) of Thailand’s exports, followed by Indonesia (2,800 tons). The growing role of these two countries, at the expense of Thailand, is in line with previous predictions. Also in 2015 the exports of frozen preserved and prepared shrimps from Vietnam and Indonesia will grow further at the expense of exports from Thailand.

The import prices in the EU for Thai preserved and prepared frozen shrimps increased from €6.2/kg in 2010 to €8.9/kg in 2013 and even further to €10.9 in 2015. This may be a result of the supply shortage in Thailand and globally, which caused the price for raw material to increase.

Vietnam took over Thailand’s position as number one supplier of preserved and prepared frozen shrimps to the EU. Vietnam’s exports amounted to 17,500 tons (€156 million) in 2014. Vietnam’s main destinations in the EU are the Netherlands and the UK (both 22%), followed by Germany (18%), Belgium (13%) and France (12%).

**Tips:**

- You can do more research on these exporting countries by visiting the websites of VASEP or MPEDA.
- For further research on price information, you can visit the websites of Globefish or the European market observatory for fishery and aquaculture products.
- You can also take a look at national sector associations that provide extensive information about active importers and exporters. Visit, for example, the website of Dutch Fish.
- Gather data about market developments of Vannamei shrimps and other shrimp species. Globefish provides quarterly information on developments in the global seafood market.

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⁴ Asian countries that still benefit from the GSP are the Philippines, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, India and Pakistan.


**Exports**

In 2014 Belgium was the largest (re-)exporter of frozen shrimps and prawns (around €246 million excluding cold-water shrimps and prawns) in the EU, accounting for some 25% of total European exports. Globally imported shrimps enter Europe via the port of Antwerp, from where they are distributed to the surrounding EU markets. The most important export markets for Belgium are France (9,500 tons in 2014), the Netherlands (7,000 tons), Spain (4,500 tons), Germany (3,600 tons) and the UK (940 tons). Spain re-exported mainly to Italy (11,500 tons), Portugal (8,900 tons) and France (3,500 tons) (Note that Spanish exports are virtually all vannamei shrimps.) The Netherlands re-exported mainly to Germany (9,700 tons), Belgium (5,000 tons) and Spain (4,000 tons).

The price difference between import and re-export was highest for Spain. This can be attributed to the large processing industry in that country. Spain imports large volumes of cheap raw shrimp materials (mostly from Argentina and Ecuador), and after cooking and packaging a small share of total output is re-exported.

**Consumption**

Unfortunately, there is no precise information on consumption in Europe and apparent consumption is very difficult to calculate on account of exports often being reprocessed inside the EU and values and volumes changing. In general, however, shrimp represents only a small part of overall seafood consumption. The share in terms of value is greater than the share in terms of volume. In the current economic situation, it is anticipated that the share of shrimp will continue to decrease in the next few years because it is a relatively expensive product.

Countries such as Spain, Italy, and France import raw material to a large extent, mostly HOSO, as a source for domestic shrimp cookeries. Northern and western European countries, on the other hand, import more cooked or peeled shrimps.

As mentioned earlier, northern and western European countries predominantly import their shrimps from Asian countries, while southern European countries tend to source mainly from South American countries.

During normal times, vannamei shrimps are cheaper than black tiger shrimps. A temporarily different situation occurred in 2013-2014 when the shortage of vannamei shrimp supply pushed the prices of vannamei shrimps up to the same level as for black tiger. This was a temporarily negative situation for vannamei, as with equal prices consumers prefer to buy black tiger shrimp on account of its colour and taste. In 2015 prices of vannamei are expected to come back to normal levels and this may result in a growth in vannamei consumption.
The lion share of consumption in southern Europe comprises vannamei shrimp.

Import prices per kilogram are higher in western Europe than in southern Europe. This is mainly explained by the fact that Spain and France import large volumes of cheap Vannamei raw materials for their domestic shrimp cookeries. Western European buyers tend to purchase more value-added products and products that are already cooked, resulting in higher import prices. This situation is expected to remain the same in the coming years as the shrimp cookeries in France and Spain are not expected to outsource their processing activities to Asia or South America.

**Tips:**
- To find information about consumer preferences for shrimp products, take a look at the websites of large retailers in the different EU Member States such as Albert Heijn (the Netherlands), Eroski (Spain), Carrefour (France), Sainsbury’s (United Kingdom), and Metro (Germany).
- If you want to do business with southern Europe, make sure your marketing staff speaks Spanish.

**What trends offer opportunities on the European market for cultured Vannamei shrimp?**

*CBI Trends for frozen shrimps* provides you with general trends in the European frozen shrimp market. This section provides specific details for cultured Vannamei shrimp.

**Sustainable production becoming a requirement**

On the European market, the northern part is one of the most progressive and critical regions with regard to responsible and sustainable food production. ASC shrimp certification started in 2014 and the first ASC certified shrimp became available in the Scandinavian market at the end of 2014. Other countries in northern and western Europe have followed in 2015 and ASC is expected to gain in importance in other parts of Europe too over the long term. Therefore it is good to invest in this upcoming standard.

**Organic Vannamei shrimps**

In addition to the need for sustainable seafood on the (northern) European market, there is also a demand for organic seafood. It can be interesting for you to investigate the market potential of organic Vannamei shrimps in Europe.

**Tips:**
- The *ASC website* provides useful information on the certification process of shrimps and possibilities to get support.
- Organic Vannamei shrimps could be a potential niche product for your marketing plan.

**Consumer awareness**

European consumers want to know where their food comes from and how it is produced or caught. The shrimp farming sector, particularly in Asia, has received negative attention in Europe. Negative impact on communities and the environment by the shrimp sector has been criticized. As a supplier, you need to invest in transparency and sustainability to increase your potential in Europe.

**Convenience food**

In Europe, demand for convenience food is on the rise due to busy lifestyles and time pressure. Consumers prefer meals that are easy to prepare and easy to cook. Easy-to-cook meals often also need to be inexpensive, meaning that Vannamei shrimp will be preferred most of the time. If you can serve this market with inexpensive PUD products, this can be an opportunity for you in the future.

**Value-added**

Although most of the imported shrimps in Europe are HOSO, there is a trend towards more ready-to-eat products. Discuss with your clients the potential of value-added products on the European market in the form of e.g. marinated shrimps or skewers.
Higher demand for low-value products

As a result of the economic crisis, the import value is expected to decrease in the future, with shrimp consumption remaining stable. The demand for cheaper shrimps, such as Vannamei shrimps, will increase, while demand for black tiger shrimps will fall. This is to the advantage of Vannamei shrimps on account of their lower import value. However, as a result of the global supply crisis, prices are currently rising to unprecedented levels. It is expected that prices will fall again in the longer term once the supply shortage has been solved.

What requirements should shrimps comply with to be allowed on the European market?

Requirements can be divided into: (1) musts, which are legal requirements you must meet in order to enter the market, 2) non-legal requirements, which are those most of your competitors have already implemented, in other words, the ones you need to comply with in order to keep up with the market; and (3) additional requirements for specific segments.

You can find a general overview of the EU buyer requirements for fish and seafood on the Market Intelligence Platform of CBI including many tips for how to get more details or how to meet these requirements. A summary of the requirements follows below, including some specific details for shrimps.

What legal requirements must my product comply with?

These are the legal requirements for the import of shrimps into the EU:
- Approved country and establishment: Your country must be on the list of EU-approved countries in order for you to export fish to the EU market.
- Traceability rules: It means that the label has to offer precise information on its harvesting and production. It applies to all unprocessed and some processed seafood, whether it is pre-packed or not.
- Catch certificate to combat illegal fishing: To combat illegal fishing, (wild caught) fish imported or transhipped in the EU must be accompanied by a catch certificate.
- Health certificate: The fishery products you export to the EU must be accompanied by a health certificate.
- Hygiene above all: There is a list of requirements that fishery products must meet, but to sum up many of these are related to hygiene. The implementation of HACCP is one of the measures you need to take, but the general hygiene of your establishment must also be good and is of key importance to potential buyers.
- Contaminants – restricted and tested: Contaminants that may end up in the food product as a result of various stages in the process or environmental contamination, are restricted by EU legislation. Fish destined for the EU market is generally tested before shipped, sometimes in the buyer's own lab, sometimes in recognized (independent) labs, in order to prevent costly border rejections. For Vannamei shrimp, it is about which chemicals may be used during the production, and which residues for Vannamei shrimp are allowed in the EU.
- Microbiological contamination: just like contaminants, microbiological contamination has restrictions and is therefore examined in the fish destined for the EU market.

Tip:
- For a full list of requirements, including those mentioned above, but also specific labelling requirements for fish, please consult the EU Export Helpdesk, where you can select your specific product code under chapter 03 or 16.

What additional requirements do buyers often have?

For shrimps, additional requirements are mainly requirements with respect to food safety. The most commonly requested food safety certification schemes for seafood products are IFS and (or) BRC, and also GLOBAL GAP.
What are the requirements for niche markets?

In the EU, sustainability certification is still seen as a niche market requirement, although sustainability certification has become a buyer requirement for several large retail and food service companies in some European countries (e.g. Germany). For wild-caught fishery products, MSC is the major certification scheme, while ASC is the most important certification scheme for aquaculture. As can be read in the section on trends, the first ASC certified shrimp became available in the European market at the end of 2014.

In addition, in some European countries such as Germany and Switzerland, organic products are becoming an important niche market. Producing Vannamei shrimp organically and achieving organic certification can boost your business opportunities in the European market. One leading organic certification scheme in Europe is Naturland (from Germany). Naturland is an association for organic agriculture. Naturland was created in Germany in 1982. Since the mid-nineties, Naturland is very successful in conducting organic aquaculture projects.

What do the trade channels and interesting market segments look like in Europe for cultured Vannamei shrimp?

For more general information about market segments and channels, take a look at Market Channels and Segments for seafood products in Europe, which is available at the CBI market information platform. This section provides detailed information about the various marketing channels through which Vannamei shrimps are marketed in Europe.

Large Vannamei importers have their own quality agents at origin to check the quality of the shrimp products. These checks can be a final inspection at the end of the production chain or monitoring throughout the process.

Tips:
- The International Trade Center (ITC) offers fact sheets on several certification schemes, e.g. on IFS or BRC.
- Visit the GLOBALG.A.P. website to learn more about the important rules for sustainable farming.

Tips:
- The ASC website provides useful information on the certification process for shrimps and possibilities of obtaining support.
- Go to the website of Naturland to find out the possibilities for farming organic shrimps.
- On this website of the EU, you can find more about organic certification.
The general trend in Europe is to shorten the supply chain. Retailers and food service companies are starting to buy directly from the source to an increasing extent. If you want to supply retailers or food service companies directly, supply volumes and consistency of supply are crucial. However, as Vannamei shrimp is often sold in smaller volumes, most of the products are still imported by traditional import companies.

Imported fishery products enter Europe either by ship or by air freight. Frozen cultured Vannamei shrimps are mainly transported by ship. Important ports in Europe are Rotterdam (the Netherlands), Antwerp (Belgium), Hamburg or Bremen (Germany), and Marseille (France).

In general, more and more people are buying shrimps at the supermarket for preparation at home, instead of eating these shrimps at restaurants. This is to the advantage of Vannamei shrimp as the share of Vannamei shrimp on the retail market is on the rise as a result of price-oriented consumers. Unfortunately, there is no information available regarding the share of Vannamei or Monodon in supermarkets. This will also vary widely from country to country.

Although the out-of-home segment for tropical shrimp traditionally uses mostly Monodon product because of its preferred taste and sizes, the economic crisis is causing Vannamei to be preferred to an increasing extent on account of its price. Monodon is still preferred only in really high-class restaurants and in southern Europe. This is an opportunity for you, if you can supply larger size Vannamei shrimp at a lower price than Monodon.

Retail groups in Europe often have different formulas, varying from premium supermarkets to discount stores. In most cases each formula has its own purchasing and distribution system. Large retail groups do not import directly from exporters from Developing Countries, preferring to source from a small number of large importers.

**Tips:**
- It is an advantage to be transparent. Give your buyer the possibility to monitor the overall production process.
- Retail and food service companies expect a lot from their suppliers. If you want to sell to these kinds of markets, make sure that you can provide high quality documents (IFS and/or BRC) and a stable supply.
- Try to invest in a product that is suitable for selling in supermarkets. Take a look at supermarket websites to see their assortments.
- If you are aiming to supply your products to the retail segment in Europe, find out which large import and wholesale companies trade with large retailers in Europe. Large companies that supply to the retail segment include Deutsche See in Germany, Galana in Belgium or Heiploeg and Klaas Puul in the Netherlands.
- If you want to access the European market, consider participating in the Seafood Expo Global in Brussels or Conxemar in Vigo (Spain), the largest seafood trade shows in Europe. These trade shows give you the opportunity to showcase your products and meet potential buyers from European countries.

**Useful sources**
This survey was compiled for CBI by LEI Wageningen UR and updated by Globally Cool – Creative Solutions for Sustainable Business, in collaboration with CBI sector expert Siegfried Bank.

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