

Exporting carp to Europe

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Although carp is not among the most popular seafood in the EU, the increase in EU imports of carp is promising. In the last 4 years, EU imports of carp increased with about 22% to €57.5 million in 2017. The chance of continuing growth is certainly there, so Europe will offer interesting opportunities to carp exporters in the upcoming years. The main carp import countries in the EU are the UK, Italy, Spain, and the Netherlands. Currently, the largest EU supplier of carp is Myanmar with 57% of the total EU imports.

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1. Product description

Carp are various species from the family *Cyprinidae*, specified as oily freshwater fish. Several carp species have been domesticated and reared as food fish across Asia and Europe. Almost 97% of global carp production today comes from farms. The HS codes referred to in this product fact sheet are provided below. When “carp” is referred to in this survey, this concerns the following [Harmonised System](#) codes, unless stated otherwise:

- 03038910 – Frozen freshwater fish
- 03032500 – Frozen carp
- 03046900 – Frozen carp fillets

This section provides you with basic information about specifications for fishery and aquaculture products in the EU. Important legislation is the recently renewed Common Organisation of the Markets, 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 carp for the European market.

Labelling

The contents of labelling must be provided in the language of the country to which the product is exported. 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. EU Member States publish a list of the commercial and scientific names accepted in its territory;

- Production method: It must be stated that it is a cultured product;
- Origin: There must be a reference to the country in which it is produced;
- Presentation: It must be stated how the product is processed (for frozen whole fish or fillet products; for fresh products gutted, with or without head, filleted, thawed, other);
- Net weight: The net weight must be stated 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 batch number;
- Nutrition: Ingredients and nutrition must be stated;

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

2. Which European markets offer opportunities for exporters of carp?

This section provides you with more detailed statistics of carp trade in Europe.

Imports

The major export countries of carp are Myanmar, Bangladesh and China. Myanmar’s carp exports to Europe are increasing every year, while the exports of the other countries are more fluctuating over the years.

The main carp import countries of Europe are the UK, Italy, Spain, the Netherlands, France and Sweden. The UK, Italy, the Netherlands and Sweden import carp mostly from Myanmar, while the largest carp imports of Spain come from China and for France this is Indonesia.

The total value of imports of carp to the EU amounted €57.5 million in 2017 in comparison to €47.0 million in 2013. This is an increase in imports of carp of about 22% in the last four years.

The largest EU supplier of carp, Myanmar, accounts for the majority of EU imports (57% of the total EU imports). This number is expected to increase in the next years due to the fact that Myanmar’s supplies show an upward trend in recent years, while other EU suppliers do not.

Re-exports

In 2017, intra-EU exports had a value of €11.1 million. The largest re-(exporter) in the EU in 2017 was the Netherlands (€3.3 million), accounting for more than 25% of total European exports. Globally imported Carp enter Europe via the port of for instance Rotterdam (the Netherlands), from where they are distributed to the surrounding EU markets.

Production

Most of the production of carp takes place in Asian countries. Number one producer is China, followed by India, Bangladesh and Indonesia. In addition to the Asian countries, quite some production of carp is happening in Egypt, Brazil and the Philippines.

When you are interested in exporting to Europe, it is good to know that there are also some European countries that produce carp themselves. The largest producing countries are Poland and Czech Republic; they both produce approximately 18 million kilograms of carp per year. Other carp producing countries in Europe are Hungary, Germany, France, Croatia and Italy.

Consumption

The consumption volume of carp per European country for the period 2013-2017 is shown in Figure 3. Note that it is very difficult to calculate apparent consumption of carp in Europe as imported carp is often being processed inside the EU and values and volumes change.

In most years, the consumption of carp was highest in the UK. However, Czech Republic and Poland are close to the consumption numbers of the UK. Overall, the consumption of carp in Europe has slightly increased during the last years.

3. What trends offer opportunities on the European market for carp?

Increasing demand of organic farmed carp

The demand of organic seafood in general is increasing in Europe, which also applies to carp. In 2015, the world production of organic carp was estimated at 7,200 tonnes. On the European market, the northern region (countries such as the Netherlands, Germany, Belgium, the UK) is one of the most progressive with regard to responsible and sustainable food production. But the southern part of Europe is also increasingly aware of the benefits of responsible and sustainable food production (countries such as Spain, France, Portugal, and Italy).

Tips:

- Consider certification if you are already producing organic carp. In case you are not producing organic carp already, the extra margin of organic carp sales does not compensate for the high costs of changing towards organic production.
- Visit [Natlurland Standards for Organic Aquaculture](#) for an overview of the standards needed to obtain a Naturland organic certification for your carp.

Changing food product sizes

In Europe, the life style of people is changing. Families are smaller, which results also in different needs of type of food products. The portions are smaller for a small family than for a big family, therefore people are less likely to buy for instance a whole frozen carp. They are more likely to buy pieces of carp. Until now, carp is not so adapted to the changing lifestyle.

Tip:

- Sell carp in smaller pieces instead of whole carp.

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. For instance pre-fried, already breaded and formed fish. Easy-to-cook meals often also need to be inexpensive.

Tip:

- Discover the possibilities for a convenience carp-based product.

Carp is considered as a healthy fish

As there is an increasing trend in European markets to have a healthy lifestyle, carp is a good fit in this lifestyle. Carp contains many minerals and vitamins, especially vitamin B12 and phosphorous. Probably because of this, consumption has shown an upward trend in recent years.

- Focus on the healthy aspects of carp in your marketing plan.

Bad taste reputation of carp

In many countries in Europe, for instance in the Netherlands, people believe freshwater fish, such as carp, tastes muddy. The contrary is the fact in East European countries, where they see carp as a delicacy. A remedy for the muddy taste is to cleanse the carp, for instance by transferring them into natural spring fed tanks several days before harvest.

Carp during Christmas and Easter

In Eastern Europe, carp is the traditional Christmas and Easter meal. Consumption numbers are therefore very high around these holidays in Eastern European countries, such as Hungary, Slovakia, Poland, the Czech Republic, Austria, Germany and Croatia. The tradition consists of getting carp out of a river and letting it swim in a bathtub at home for at least two days. However, more and more people nowadays buy the fish ready to cook from a store.

4. What requirements should carp 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 and (2) common and additional requirements that buyers may request.

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 carp.

Legal requirements

These are the legal requirements for the import of carp 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. Find out here which processed seafood this applies for.
- 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.
- Microbiological contamination: just like contaminants, microbiological contamination has restrictions and is therefore examined in the fish destined for the EU market.

Tips:

- For a full list of requirements, including the ones mentioned above but also [specific labelling requirements for fish](#), please consult the [EU Export Helpdesk](#) where you can select your specific product code.
- On the export desk of the EU, you can find more information [about control of residues of veterinary medicines](#).

5. Through what channels can you get carp on the European market?

This section provides detailed information about the various marketing channels through which carp can be marketed in Europe.

Imported fishery products enter Europe either by ship or by airfreight. Important ports in Europe are Rotterdam (the Netherlands), Antwerp (Belgium), Hamburg and Bremen (Germany), and Marseille (France).

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.

Although the food-service segment represents considerable shares of food and also seafood consumption in Europe (note that shares differ a lot from country to country), the food-service segment in Europe is rather fragmented. Only a few food-service players operate on a multinational level and the food-service market segmentation differs a lot from country to country.

Tips:

- Check [CBI's market study](#) about the ethnic fish market, as some of the fishes popular in this market are carp-like fishes (e.g. rohu and hilsa).
- Note the differences between the retail segment and food-service segment in Europe. Discuss with your clients what the differences are between the retail segment and the food-service segment to better understand their specific needs.
- It is an advantage to be transparent. Give your buyer the possibility to monitor the overall production process.
- 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.

6. What are the end-market prices for carp?

Consumer prices of carp products in the different European countries are presented below to give you an impression of the price level in Europe.


Table 1: Consumer prices for carp in 2018

Product	Price (€/kg)	Country
Live carp	3.70/2.91	Slovakia/Hungary
Carp fillet boneless	19.90	Germany
Carp fillet	7.07/6.36	Poland/Hungary
Purified carp	3.99	Hungary


Source: Innova database

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