

Here to give the UK seafood sector  
the support it needs to thrive.



# Cod 2024

This Market Insight factsheet intends to provide the United Kingdom (UK) seafood industry a summary of the of cod in the retail, foodservice and trade sectors.

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12/02/2024 Suzi Pegg-Darlison (15-minute read)

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## Factsheet overview

This Market Insight factsheet intends to provide the United Kingdom (UK) seafood industry a summary of cod in the retail, foodservice and trade sectors.

Consumer preferences are constantly changing with several factors playing a role in purchasing decisions. Understanding this and having insights into the seafood market and its role in the retail, foodservice and trade sectors, can help to run a successful seafood business.

### Top takeaways

Cod remains a popular species in the UK purchased by consumers in and out of home. It's the third most imported species by volume, the 3<sup>rd</sup> most popular seafood species by volume sales in retail and is 21% of all seafood servings in foodservice.

### UK trade and supply

The third most imported species by volume, 13.2% of all seafood imports are cod. In terms of volume, most imports were from Iceland and most exports were to France. Volume of imports and exports of cod has experienced year on year decline in 2022.

### UK retail

Worth £481m, cod is 11% of the total seafood sales and the third most purchased species in terms of volume, 45,454 tonnes, seeing year on year price driven value growth (+3.0%) with volume sales in decline (-12.4%).

### GB foodservice

21% of all the seafood servings out of home are cod. Overall, it was a good year to September 2023 for cod with servings up 3% on the previous year end. Cod is usually purchased in a fried format in the Fish and Chip Shop channel.

## UK trade and supply

The following sections provide details of total cod imports and exports; comparing provisional HMRC data from 2022 to finalised data of 2021.

Allocating trade statistics to a single species is not always possible, statistics presented in this report should be interpreted with caution. The extent of cod trade available can be found below in the trade data notes and limitations section.

Cod import and export statistics presented here may be an underestimation of the true value. The UK trades a high volume of processed whitefish products such as breaded or battered frozen fillets. The species making up these products can't be distinguished within the trade statistics available but may include cod.

### Landings

In 2022 total UK landings by UK vessels value in 2022 was £738.3 million, an increase of +6.7% compared to 2021 with 7.5% of this value coming from cod.

Cod was the second main demersal fish, behind haddock, landed into the UK-by-UK vessels by volume. Cod represented 12.8% of all demersal landed volume, an increase of 2.2 percentage points compared to 2021. By value, cod landings represent 19.6% of all demersal landings, up 5.6 percentage points compared to 2021.

In total, 14,918 tonnes of cod were landed into the UK, by UK vessels. This was a 27.6% increase on 2021 volumes. Cod landings value to UK ports by UK vessels in 2022 was £55.0 million, an increase of +59.5% compared to 2021.

### Imports

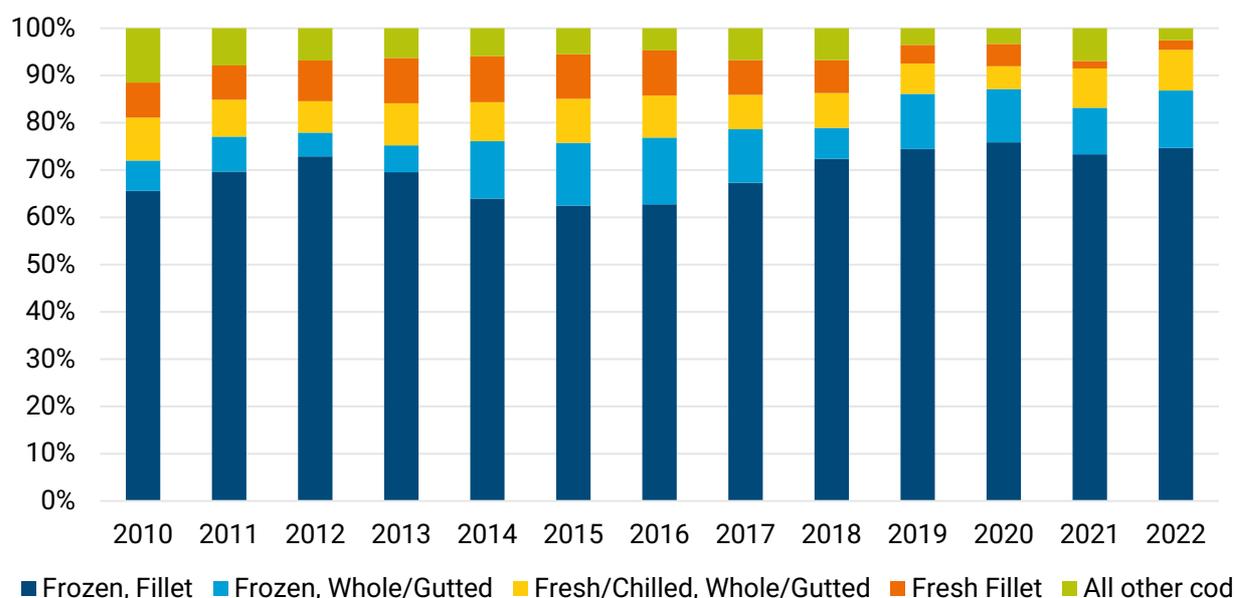
Most cod available in the UK for domestic consumption are imported from other countries.

In 2022, 15.5% of the overall value of total seafood imports to the UK were from cod a decrease of 0.1 percentage points compared to 2021. Cod made up 13.2% of the overall volume of total seafood import to the UK, a decrease of 1.5 percentage points.

The total value of cod imported to the UK in 2022 was £564.1 million, an increase of £73.8 million (+15.1%) compared to 2021. This growth was price led as the volume imported decreased by 11,565 tonnes (-12.0%) to 84,808 tonnes. The average price of imported cod increased by £1.56/kg (+30.7%) between 2021 and 2022, experiencing higher price inflation than the average imported seafood product which reached +18.6%.

By volume, over four fifths of all cod is imported frozen, a higher proportion than in 2021. However, the volume of imported frozen cod products declined 8.5%. The chart below shows share of cod by the format in which it was imported into the UK.

**Chart 1. UK cod import volume by format in 2010 to 2022.**



Over one fifth all cod imports were from Iceland, with 84% from the top five countries of consignment as listed below in table 1. This shows more details of the top five exporting countries by import volume of cod.

**Table 1. Imports to the UK of cod by exporting country (Top five)**

Rank	Exporting Country	Volume (tonnes)		Growth (year on year)		Share of Total Cod Import
		2021	2022	Percentage	Actual (tonnes)	
1	Iceland	23,091	19,335	-16.2%	-3,735	23%
2	China	17,861	18,674	+4.6%	+813	22%
3	Norway	15,498	17,084	+10.2%	+1,587	20%
4	Russia	12,590	10,155	-19.3%	-2,434	12%
5	Faroe Islands	6,724	6,052	-10.0%	-671	7%
<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>96,374</b>	<b>84,807</b>	<b>-12.0%</b>	<b>-11,565</b>	

Cod was the third most imported species of seafood imported to the UK with tuna and salmon being imported in higher volumes. In 2022 Salmon experienced volume declines (-11.1%) with tuna experiencing growth (+4.3%).

## Exports

In 2022 1.5% of the total exported seafood volume was from cod and 1.2% of the overall value of total seafood exports from the UK were from cod, a decrease of 0.5 respectively compared to 2021.

5,074 tonnes of cod were exported from the UK to other countries, worth £21.0m. This is a decline of 1,941 tonnes (-27.7%) and £6.0m (-22.3%) less cod exported in 2022.

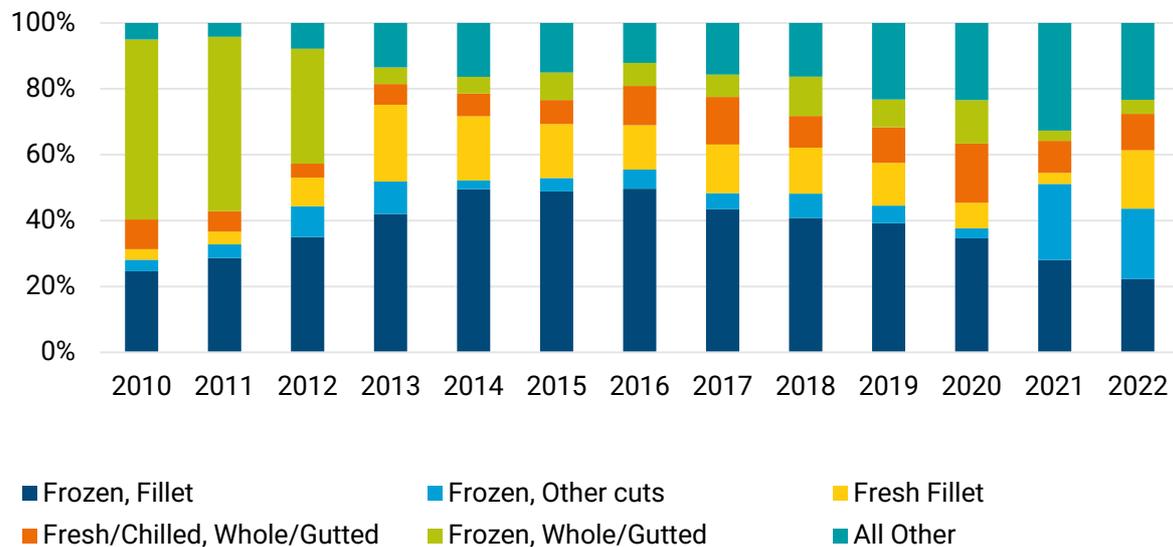
Over one fifth of all cod exports were to France, with 77% from the top five destination countries as listed below in table 1. This shows more details of the top five importing countries by export volume of cod.

**Table 2. Exports from the UK of cod by destination country (Top five)**

Rank	Destination Country	Volume (tonnes)		Growth (year on year)		Share of Total Cod Exports
		2021	2022	Percentage	Actual (tonnes)	
1	France	2,135	1,407	-34.1%	-728	28%
2	Irish Republic	1,207	1,339	+10.9%	+132	26%
3	Denmark	190	575	+203.1%	+385	11%
4	Portugal	267	308	+15.1%	+40	6%
5	Spain	439	299	-31.8%	-139	6%
	<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>7,015</b>	<b>5,074</b>	<b>-27.7%</b>	<b>-1,941</b>	

Of all the species exported from the UK, cod ranked fifteenth in terms of volume. The top five exported species included salmon, mackerel, herring, other marine fish, and nephrops. Except for salmon and nephrops, all species experienced year on year growth.

Over two fifths of all cod volume is exported frozen, a lower proportion than in 2021. The volume of frozen cod products experienced declines of 36.1%. A higher proportion of exported cod products were fresh fillets. Exported fresh fillets of cod increased by 665 tonnes (+283%). The chart below shows share of cod by format exported.

**Chart 2. Cod export volume from the UK by format in 2010 to 2022.**

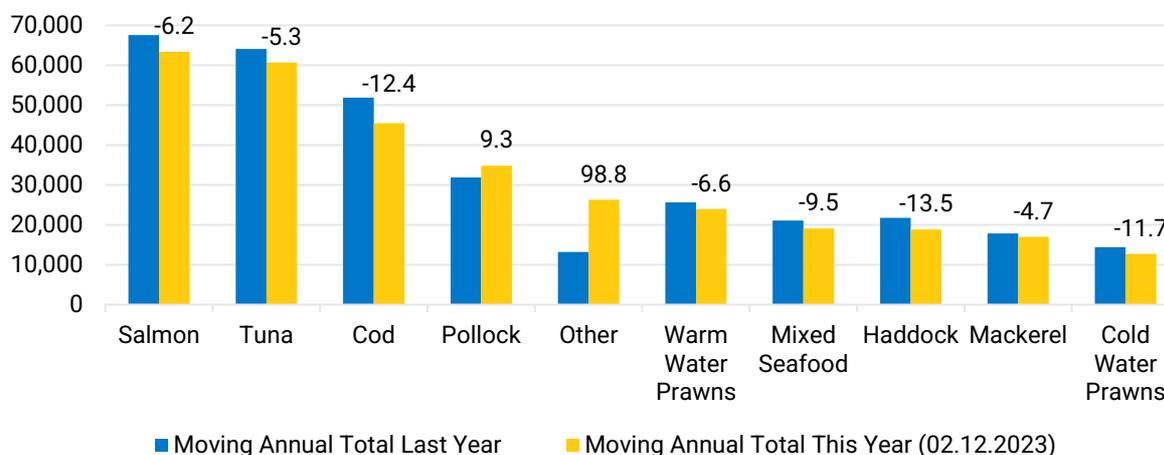
## UK retail sector

Cod is a white fish species that is popular with UK consumers when purchasing seafood in the retail sector. This section provides details of consumer purchases of cod in the retail market including cod shopper profiles.

### Cod sales in retail

By volume, cod was the third bestselling fish of all seafood species sold in retail, with 12% of all seafood volume sales in retail being to cod. UK shoppers purchased just over 45,454 tonnes of cod equating to a retail value of £481.4m over the 52 weeks ending 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2023. Retail sales are increasing in value by 3.0%, but this is price driven with volume sales in 12.4% decline and price per kg up 17.5%. Chart 3 below shows the top ten species by volume with year-on-year growth.

**Chart 3. Volume sales (tonnes) of the Top 10 species in retail with volume percentage growth (%) to 52 week ending 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2023.**



### Sales by sector

Almost two-thirds of the volume sales of cod are purchased in the frozen sector with two-fifths being chilled. There were no ambient sales of cod in retail in the 52 weeks to 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2023.

Volume sales of cod experienced declines in both the chilled (-0.03%) and frozen (-19.1%) sectors compared to the same period in 2022.

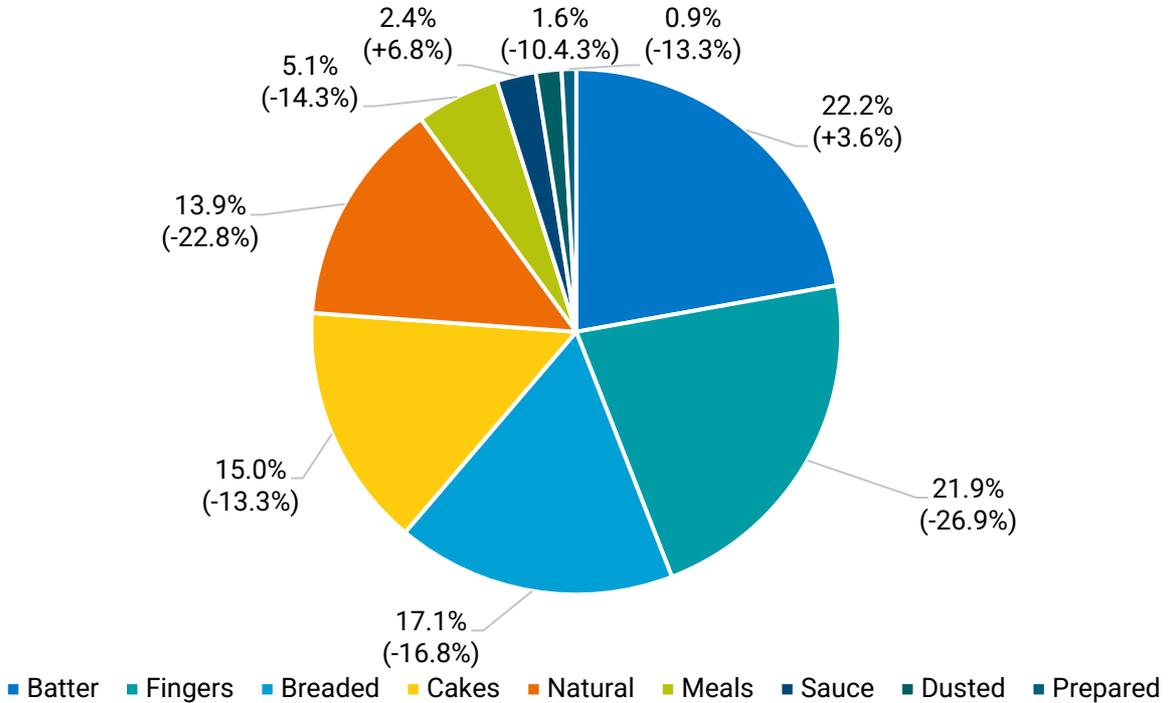
In terms of value, frozen experienced declines of 1.8% with chilled cod in 8.5% price driven growth.

### Sales by segment

Cod is sold in nine product formats in retail known as segments; natural, cakes, breaded, batter, fingers, meals, sauce, dusted, prepared. There were no sushi sales of cod in the 52 weeks to 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2023.

Of the nine segments batter has the largest share of cod volume sales at 22.2%. Batter (+3.6%), cakes (+13.3%) and sauce (+6.8%) are the only segments experiencing volume growth all other segments are experiencing declines. Chart 4 below illustrates the volume share of cod by each segment with year-on-year growth.

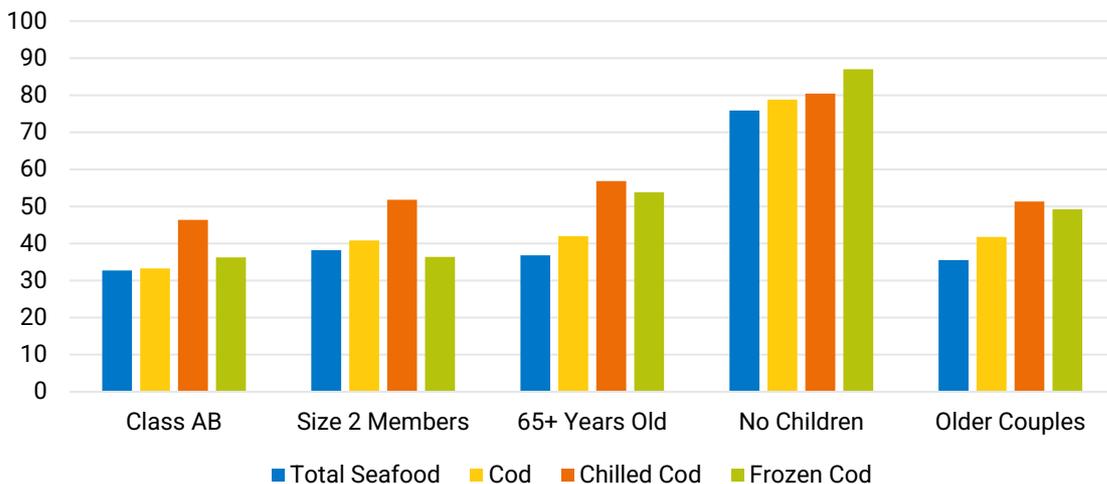
**Chart 4. Volume sales share of cod in retail by segment with volume percentage growth (%) to 52 week ending 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2023.**



**The cod shopper (GB)**

When comparing with the overall seafood shopper profile, the cod shopper is quite distinct. They are more affluent, from smaller households, are older and tend not to have children. The graph below shows the cod shopper demographics by sector with clear differences between the chilled and frozen cod shopper by purchase volume.

**Chart 5. Purchase volume share of trade for each demographic across cod and by chilled and frozen to 52 week ending 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2023.**



Overall frequency of purchases declined with less householders buying cod and buying less volume.

## GB Foodservice

Cod is a popular species with GB consumers when eating Out of Home. This section provides details of consumer purchases of cod Out of Home including cod consumer demographics.

When eating Out of Home, diners purchase cod in a range of formats and across six different channels. However, most commonly cod will be sold in a fried format from the Fish and Chip Shop channel.

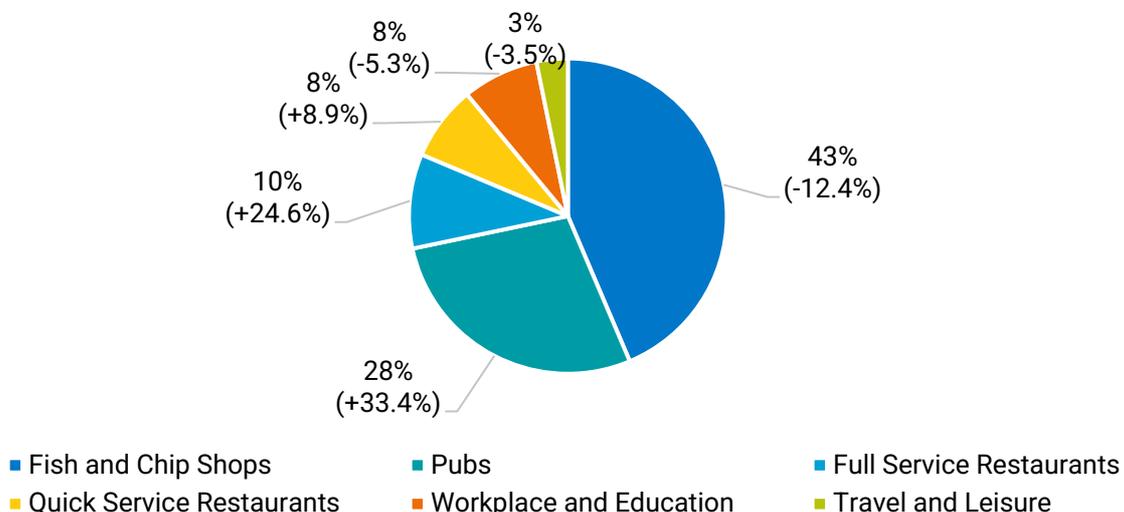
### Total performance and channel performance

Of the total seafood servings Out of Home (977m servings), cod account for 21% (203m servings), approximately 28,501 tonnes\*. Overall, it was a good year to September 2023 for cod with servings up 3% on the previous year.

*\*Tonnes is an estimation calculated by the total number of servings sold multiplied by 140g, the recommended serving size of seafood.*

Two-fifths of all cod servings are sold through the Fish and Chip Shop channel (43%), this is followed by Pubs (28%), Full-Service Restaurants (10%), Quick Service Restaurants (8%), Workplace and Education (8%) and Travel and Leisure (3%). Servings growth was seen in Pubs, Full-Service Restaurants and Quick Service Restaurants, all other channels were in decline, as illustrated in chart 6 below.

**Chart 6. Servings share of cod by GB foodservice channel with servings growth (%) to 12 months year end September 2023.**



## Consumer demographics and motivations

Compared to total foodservice, cod appeals to a less affluent consumer but overall, over 65% of all servings are to a more affluent consumer. It also over indexes with the youngest age category 0 to 17 years of age, but almost half of all servings (48.2%) remain to those over fifty years of age. This is particular the case in pubs where over 57% of all servings are to those fifty and over. However, this slightly under indexes with total food and drink servings where 49.3% of servings are to this age group.

Overall cod appeals slightly more to male consumers especially in Pubs, however in Full-Service Restaurants over half of all cod servings are to women.

Cod is consumed predominately on adult only occasions, especially at Pubs. Servings are usually occurring during dinner, especially at Quick Service Restaurants. Cod consumption over indexes at weekends, being most popular on Fridays and Saturdays. It has an opportunity to appeal to families with weekdays providing a good growth opportunity too.

Consumers turn to cod during a social occasion, especially at Pubs. There is an opportunity to be seen as a more functional and treating food type.

## Sources

Data sources: (%) values represent changes from the previous year unless otherwise stated.

Resources used in the production of this factsheet can be viewed below.

NielsenIQ (NIQ) retail data to 52 week ending 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2023:

- ScanTrack – UK EPOS from key retailers (including composite data from discounters Aldi, Lidl and Northern Ireland) excludes seafood sandwiches.
- HomeScan – GB (including discounters) consumer panel of 15,000 households excludes seafood sandwiches.

Circana foodservice data:

- Panel based data to year ending September 2023.

HMRC trade data\*:

- Import, exports, and landing HMRC data provided by BTS data to year ending December 2022.

Additional data and insights used to produce this factsheet:

- Seafish, 2023, Seafood Segments in the Retail Market
- Seafish, 2023, Seafood Trends in Commercial Foodservice (2023 Update)
- Seafish, 2023, Latest Quarterly UK Seafood Trade Data

Are you interested in the data behind the insights? Individuals working for seafood businesses can register for the Market Insight Portal on [Seafish.org](https://www.seafish.org) and access the [Retail](#), [Foodservice](#), and [Trade](#) data and reports directly. [Click here to register today.](#)

### \*Trade data notes and limitations

HMRC trade in goods statistics cover seafood products imported to and exported from UK ports and presented as 8-digit combined nomenclature commodity (CN8) codes. We process these statistics using the EUMOFA (EU Market Observatory for Fisheries and Aquaculture) methodology. This allows for analysis of the value and volume of main commercial species, species groups, preservation and presentation states traded with the UK by partner country. Published data is provisional for 18-months and subject to change over this time.

The species defined in trade statistics are defined based on CN8 commodity codes. Some traded commodities may include products containing a variety of different species or groups of species, meaning that individual species can't be identified.

Deep-frozen raw fish fillets coated with batter or breadcrumbs are missing from this analysis. These products are grouped as "other marine fish" under commodity code 16041991 and can't be identified to a single species but may include cod.

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