

# CATCH-UP

## Autumn 2021

FEATURING THIS SEASON'S **MARKET REPORT**,  
OUR FISH **BUYERS' PICKS** AND A ROUND-UP OF  
**FISHY INDUSTRY NEWS**



[directseafoods.co.uk](http://directseafoods.co.uk)

## Fish processors demand urgent action from PM on labour shortage

Source (full article): [fishfocus.co.uk](http://fishfocus.co.uk)

**The Scottish Seafood Association today demanded urgent action from the Prime Minister on labour shortages within the sector during a face-to-face meeting in Fraserburgh.**

Chief executive Jimmy Buchan outlined how Brexit and Covid-19 had combined to create a perilous situation for companies, with production and export capacity severely reduced.

During a lively meeting Mr Buchan said: "I along with others from the catching sector made it plain to the Prime Minister that the Brexit deal had fallen far short of expectations.

"And most pertinently for the processing sector, I sought an assurance that the Government would work closely with us to resolve the critical shortage of labour.



## 103 seafood factories closed in Vietnam due to nationwide covid-19 epidemic

Source (full article): [seafoodsource.com](http://seafoodsource.com)

**At least 103 seafood processing plants in southern Vietnam have been temporarily shuttered due to lockdowns imposed in response to the country's largest-ever outbreak of COVID-19.**

More than 178,000 residents have contracted the virus since 27 April, with most cases in the country's south.

According to a report from the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, 21 of the closed factories reported positive COVID-19 cases among their workers, Thanh Nien Online reported 5 August.

Since the middle of July, Vietnam's government has instituted lockdowns in dozens of southern provinces and municipalities, and on 31 July, Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh extended a federally mandated lockdowns in 19 provinces and cities, including Ho Chi Minh City – Vietnam's main gateway for seafood exports – and the Mekong Delta, the country's primary region for seafood production, by another two weeks through mid-August.

## BUYER RECOMMENDS...

Good picks this season include:

- **Mackerel**
- **Mussels**
- **Plaice**
- **Gilthead Bream**
- **UK Trout (including ChalkStream®)**

## SOCIAL CATCH-UP...

[@Direct\\_Seafoods](https://twitter.com/Direct_Seafoods)

## Fishermen blast 'codswallop' tory quotas as £32 million of promised fish 'don't exist'

Source (full article): [mirror.co.uk](http://mirror.co.uk)

**Regaining control of British waters was a major part of the Leave campaign before Brexit but six months on and questions have been raised about the supposed benefits.**

Government boasts about boosting fishing quotas after Brexit have been branded "codswallop".

A Sunday Mirror investigation – using the Government's own data and backed up by former officials – has revealed that £31.8million worth of extra fish promised in Parliament "don't exist".

That money should have come from a big rise in the quota for sole and plaice.

But James White, 38, a fisherman from Felixstowe, said: "They can increase the quota a hundred fold and we won't be able to catch more. These fish don't exist."

# FISH MARKET REPORT Autumn 2021

## OVERVIEW

It feels like we are starting to enter a semblance of normality as we head into the autumn of 2021. We can scarcely believe that a year has passed since the "Eat Out to Help Out" scheme in the summer of 2020, and that we are all starting to tentatively look towards the festive season once more. It has been hugely gratifying to work with you all again, despite the strange landscape of changing restrictions and 'pandemic' challenges that have affected all of us to varying degrees.

Sadly, the challenges remain when it comes to supply lines and logistics. We cannot promise that this is going to go away any time soon. Food distributors across the UK have seen a turbulent year facing rising costs in many areas including driver shortages, the resulting increases in agency staff rates and courier costs, steep wage increases across transport roles, National Living Wage increases, growing fuel costs, and the cost of utilities more than doubling in the past 12 months. Furthermore, additional paperwork requirements for imports as a result of Brexit will be implemented in the autumn, and these are liable to cause further issues in the supply chain.

In fish specifically, our suppliers will continue to remain under pressure due to lack of availability of both fish and human resource for processing. Help us to plan our orders well in advance by keeping in close contact with your account manager regarding your ongoing requirements. Prices have risen over the past 6-8 weeks, and there is no sign that they will go the other way any time soon. Simply put, there isn't the surplus of fish available that we would need to reduce prices. Using the Cornwall area as an example, there are many cash buyers for prime fish such as turbot, brill, and dover soles who are paying high prices. This keeps the market extremely buoyant.

Chilled transport rates are increasing by 6% on the 1st September, and most suppliers have now increased labour, packaging and distribution costs. These are being passed onto us. Many suppliers are facing a crisis within their businesses to not only recruit new staff, but also to retain existing staff. This comes at a cost. Additionally, with shipping containers in the wrong place all over the world as a result of the pandemic, freight costs have risen exponentially and continue to do so. This is affecting frozen pricing and shipping times, with delays becoming the norm.

It is important to note that suppliers take absolutely no pleasure in increasing prices. It would make our lives so much easier to leave prices static or implement reductions every month. Price negotiations take a huge amount of time and inevitably involve uncomfortable conversations when inflation is at an all-time high. We encourage you all to be flexible with your menu choices to enable alternatives for volatile species, and to work with us collaboratively to mitigate increases. Options to help reduce costs may include reducing delivery days, using the online fresh food hub to place your orders rather than leaving phone messages, increasing your order lead time, agreeing a contract extension where applicable, or increasing your average order value. Please do discuss any options that may be available to you with your account manager.

Onto the seasonal fish that should be available to you for the autumn!

Autumn is typically a good time for wild fish as the waters cool down - improving the quality of white fish in particular. Most fish are in season during this time so there should be plenty of variety to consider when planning your menus. New Icelandic quotas start on the 1st of September, and this would typically see better availability on both cod and haddock (in a normal year!). Gurnards will start to come back into season and will make a great lower cost addition to stews with their strong flavour. Flat fish should also be excellent quality with spawning seasons over. Squid should start to make a reappearance in our native waters as the temperature drops, but with the warmer Septembers we have typically seen in recent years, you may need to be patient. With the monsoon season over, we should see good availability on both tuna and swordfish. Native oysters and mussels will also be back in season. However, whilst the saying dictates you should eat native oysters in months with an "R" in them, we advise waiting until October as they are typically not at their best until this time.

Most of our core farmed fish is imported. Sea bass, gilthead bream and meagre are farmed in Turkey, salmon and halibut are predominantly from Norway, and turbot is from Spain. For this reason, all these species are subject to import issues and logistical delays as a result of Brexit induced legislation. We have already seen interruptions to shipments due to innocuous paperwork issues, and this could be set to continue as additional new legislation is implemented in October. We can only encourage that you aim to work a day in front when considering your order placement. This will help us to help you deliver consistent availability of fish dishes across your menu.

Good communication will be absolutely key to ensure we can service you well during these turbulent times, so please do pick up the phone to your account manager to discuss your requirements. Wishing you all the best for a restriction free autumn!

Natalie Hudd, Director of Sales, Direct Seafoods.

## FARMED FISH

Species	Comments
<b>Sea Bass &amp; Gilthead Bream</b>	Prices have been increasing due to continued pressure in the market. This is as a result of strong demand combined with a labour shortage in Turkey. The two main suppliers to the UK are beginning to count the cost of Brexit, and there are forecasts that prices might need to increase further. There have been threats of shortages of the smaller size fish recently, but the actual effects of this have been thankfully minimal. Farms will be using new generation fish by September, so good availability across all sizes should be restored. Whilst we can expect increases on these very popular species, they still remain viable options for most menus. A bream roasted whole with red and yellow peppers, onions, garlic and artichoke hearts makes a great autumn dish.
<b>Salmon &amp; Trout</b>	Predictions for salmon prices over the remainder of 2021 and into 2022 have oscillated wildly over recent months. We are cautious on fresh pricing as it only takes a reduction on harvesting over two weeks to push prices up. As it currently stands, with any logistical issues set aside, we anticipate some stability over forthcoming weeks which should see salmon being a reasonable option in the autumn before the usual increases as we head into the festive season. Sea reared trout, as a close alternative, should follow salmon prices and availability should be good. There are both UK and Norwegian options for sea reared trout which does offer some assurance should imports be affected. Our fresh water UK farmed trout stock includes larger fish from ChalkStream®, or smaller fish farmed in Wiltshire. Both very sensible options during these turbulent times for imports. Speak to your account manager about a longer term price fix on ChalkStream® trout. We should be able to facilitate this for you to enable some price consistency.
<b>Halibut</b>	Any farms that have closed for maintenance in August should be fully up and running in the autumn, and this should see supplies running well if there are no interruptions as a result of import issues. The majority of farmed halibut we supply is from Norway, but there are some UK farms we can draw off. Halibut is a really good option in terms of price stability and quality over the autumn. Grilled, pan-seared, baked, or ceviche – it really is a versatile premium fish.

## FARMED FISH cont

Species	Comments
<b>Other Farmed Species</b>	Farmed turbot prices are astronomical at the moment and well worth avoiding until greater volumes are imported which will help the price. The fish are predominantly farmed in Spain, and import costs are having a huge effect here. If you are keen to use farmed turbot on your menu, we strongly suggest that you keep in touch with your account manager to see when prices may ease. A lovely quality fish, but not a cost effective option at the moment. Farmed halibut are a better alternative in terms of both price and yield. Meagre is a good choice where price is concerned. Not dissimilar to sea bass, fish are larger (1k+) and yield chunky portions. Meagre is ideal to fill a position on the menu that wild bass may have once occupied when it were more sustainable. Try a salt crusted version with potatoes and capers. For the more adventurous amongst you, try our farmed yellowtail hiramasa. Widely used in raw dishes globally, yellowtail delivers a clean flavour and a melt in the mouth texture. ASC certified, we sell this fish in frozen fillet form which is ready to go.

## WILD FISH

Species	Comments
<b>Flat Fish</b>	Flat fish should be excellent quality throughout the autumn months. Plaice is fully back in season now. Whilst it is not the cheap option that it was 5 years ago, you can still fill a main course space with a 170g fillet at a reasonable price. Dover soles are extortionate at the moment due to the price they are making from cash buyers on the market. There will be very few of you who can afford to use these based on current estimates. One to avoid. Lemon sole should be more affordable if you are seeking to add a more premium flat fish to your offering. Both turbot and brill are in their prime, but like dover soles, fish are selling for huge prices at auction. One to speak to your account manager about as a special perhaps if there are occasional good landings. For a lower price point, megrim sole should be at their best in the autumn. A much softer flat fish than its counterparts, but this is reflected in the cost. Megrim are being marketed as Cornish sole at the moment to encourage customers who haven't heard of them before. Worth considering this description on your menus.
<b>White Fish</b>	Cod and haddock prices are not cheap, and we don't foresee this getting much better in the short to medium term. The market prices in Norway and Iceland are not falling, and haddock has risen of late. That being said, Iceland begin their new quota in September, so we hope that this may improve the situation somewhat. The quality will be there in the autumn, but we need to be prepared that prices will remain firm. There may be a slight easing on larger cod fillets in September, but this is not a given. We have an ongoing situation with hake in that larger fish are mainly towards Norway at the moment, and we still are unable to fish there. This means that the price for good size hake remains extremely firm and far higher than we predicted for the summer months. Quality will, however, be excellent. There may also be some deals on small to medium sized fish to take advantage of. There have been reasonable prices on smaller pollock of late, but the larger fish continue to be at a premium. Coley will be a sound option in the autumn. Good quality and economically priced. If selling as "coley" on the menu is an issue, then try to utilise in a fish pie, part of a fish stew, or cut into goujons and breaded or battered.
<b>Round Fish</b>	There should be good landings of mackerel in both September and October. This makes this lovely fish a good choice for the autumn. Sustainable, healthy and well priced, UK mackerel can be used in a myriad of starters or main courses. There may be a few Cornish sardines still around if we have good weather in September, so a great time to take advantage of the last showings of these before the bad weather hits and fish become scarce. Monkfish prices have increased over the summer. Demand has increased and the buoyant export market has seen some high prices at auction. The fish will be excellent quality, but one for a premium spot on the menu. Gurnard will be coming back into season soon. Avoid tub gurnards as these are not sustainable, but the grey and red gurnards can be used in moderation. Use these fish to add flavour to soups and stews. You could even roast the fillets and serve with root vegetables such as carrots and parsnips. Once fully in season, these fish should prove cost effective.
<b>Cephalopods</b>	Squid availability in our native waters will improve as the waters start to cool down. This should be later in the autumn season, so continue to utilise frozen options until that time. When they do appear, they are a great option for the menu and are extremely popular when lightly dusted and fried. Our native octopus and cuttlefish are still rated unsustainable by the Marine Conservation Society, so we do not recommend these. Try to avoid.
<b>Exotics</b>	With the monsoon season ending, availability of tuna and swordfish should improve. There are still a few issues with freight costs, but if demand improves, then this will help. There are a variety of refreshed options available that deliver a good price point, so please speak with your account manager about your choices here. Tuna remains a tricky one where sustainability is concerned. It really should be used conservatively on the menu as most available sources are rated a 4 or 5 by the Marine Conservation Society. Swordfish is better being rated a 3, and is a wonderfully versatile fish.
<b>Shellfish</b>	Mussels are coming back into season in September. Like most fish, there have been increases in the cost of the product. That being said, they still remain tremendously good value and are incredibly sustainable. They can be used as the star of the show in moules mariniere or moules-frites, or as part of a seafood linguine or paella. We can't recommend these enough – particularly as they are cultivated around our UK shores. Likewise, our native oysters will be back in season in the autumn, but best left until October when waters are cooler. The shortage of Canadian lobsters has meant that native lobsters haven't been cost effective either this summer. The natives will start to disappear as we head into the autumn. Canadian lobster prices have fallen very slightly as there is more availability due to imports being back to twice a week. We hope that this trend will continue into the autumn. We have had real issues with availability of crab meat over the last few weeks due to a lack of human resource in the crab processing factory. Prices have also gone up due to increased operating costs. Keep in touch with your account manager about crab lines. We should see an improvement in availability of most lines, but dressed crab and handpicked brown crab meat are an issue. Cockles and clams should run well throughout the autumn, but prices may be firmer than you would normally expect due to increased labour and packaging costs. Scallops are a real problem. There is a huge shortage of USA roeless scallops, and this means we have had to look to other origins to fulfil demand such as Canada and Japan. This has been to avoid unavailable product and price increases. Unfortunately we are now looking at a scenario where the USA product is still not available, and the price rises on all origins is inevitable. Sadly our UK scallops have risen in line with this, so there is no easy alternative here.

## SMOKED, DELI & FROZEN FISH

Species	Comments
<b>Smoked Fish</b>	Smoked fish pricing usually follows on from fresh fish pricing. If the salmon price goes up, so does the smoked salmon price. If the haddock price goes up, so does the smoked haddock price. If fresh salmon remains stable, then the huge range of smoked salmon we offer will be a good option for the autumn. Smoked salmon is always a popular and versatile choice on the menu. We continue to offer a range of cures to suit every taste, but please discuss with your account manager. The smokehouses are under resourcing pressures so may need a little notice to produce any of the cures that we don't typically hold in stock. Whilst white fish is under pricing pressure, we expect smoked haddock prices to be firm but stable. Smoked haddock can be used in any number of dishes to suit an autumn menu. Perhaps kedgeree for breakfast, or served with a poached egg and mustard mashed potatoes as a main. Smoked and peppered mackerel – either fresh or frozen – will also be a good option for the autumn.

*Disclaimer - the market report is a guide using information from our buyers who have a wealth of experience. Other influences still effect greatly the market place, weather, seasonal changes, supply and demand in retail and catering alongside exchanges rates.*



# SMOKED, DELI & FROZEN FISH cont

Species	Comments
<b>Deli</b>	It's been a difficult few months for some of our deli lines due to changes in rules of origin as a result of our exit from the EU. As demand starts to increase, we should see an easing on some of the pricing as we will be able to increase our volumes which will help with transport costs. There should be no reason why you cannot use the usual range we offer which includes seafood salad, crayfish in brine, prawns in brine, marinated herrings, rollmops and anchovies in oil, but prices will likely be higher than usual. Consider crab, lobster and fish soups for the autumn as an easy starter option.
<b>Frozen Fish</b>	Due to increased costs throughout the supply chain, there has been almost a blanket increase to us on all frozen lines as our centrally held frozen stocks that are not yet in depot are subject to new transport increases from the 1st of September. On top of this increase, we are seeing other factors affecting the price of a number of species. There is a continued global shortage of pollock, and the new stock arriving to us sees increased raw material costs and increased freight costs. Similar increases are also affecting some frozen cod and haddock lines, and a number of our value added coated lines. Frozen container prices are at all time highs. We also have issues with production in other countries throughout the world where vaccination programs are not as advanced as ours. This means that there is a huge lack of resource in the factories, output is massively reduced, and some orders are being rejected. There are also some orders being cancelled. It is quite a dire situation, but we are doing our best to ensure we have availability or alternatives wherever possible when these shortages hit.

## Scientists discover 400 year-old greenland shark

Source (full article): [fishfocus.co.uk](http://fishfocus.co.uk)

**Greenland sharks are now the longest-living vertebrates known on Earth, according to scientists.**

Researchers used radiocarbon dating of eye proteins to determine the ages of 28 Greenland sharks, and estimated that one female was about 400 years old. The former vertebrate record-holder was a bowhead whale estimated to be 211 years old.

As lead author Julius Nielsen, a marine biologist from the University of Copenhagen, put it:

"We had our expectations that we were dealing with an unusual animal, but I think everyone doing this research was very surprised to learn the sharks were as old as they were."

Greenland sharks are huge and can grow up to 5m in length. Yet, they grow at just 1cm a year. They can be found, swimming slowly, throughout the cold, deep waters of the North Atlantic.

## Fish with human-looking teeth terrifies beachgoers in US

Source (full article): [independant.co.uk](http://independant.co.uk)

**A rare fish with human-like teeth was spotted by some beachgoers in the Outer Banks in North Carolina, a discovery that has caught the attention of internet users.**

The photo taken of the mysterious fish, shared on Facebook on Tuesday by Jennette's Pier — a fishing destination in Nags Head — shows the nine-pound creature opening its mouth and displaying human-like teeth, which makes it look like it's wearing dentures.

The fish was identified as a sheepshead, with several rows of molars in its mouth it uses for crushing oysters and other prey. It is believed to have received its name because its mouth looks like that of a sheep.

Sheepshead fish are usually found near rocks, jetties, reefs, and even bridges. They are also known as the "convict fish" because of their black and white stripes. Officials with the North Carolina aquarium were quoted by local media outlets as saying that these fish are extremely difficult to catch, but taste great.

## Not eating enough oily fish can be more harmful than smoking, research suggests

Source (full article): [diabetes.co.uk](http://diabetes.co.uk)

**People who don't eat enough omega-3 are more likely to die earlier than people who smoke, new study reports.**

According to the findings, a low intake of oily fish can reduce your life expectancy by five years, compared to a reduction of four years if you smoke.

Vital fatty acids stored in the oil of certain fish are considered to be beneficial for the heart and are known to decrease blood clots. Salmon and mackerel are examples of oily fish.

Dr Michael McBurney, from the University of Guelph in Canada, said: "It is interesting to note that in Japan, where the mean Omega-3 Index is greater than eight per cent, the expected life span is around five years longer than it is in the United States, where the mean Omega-3 Index is about five per cent.

"Hence, in practice, dietary choices that change the Omega-3 Index may prolong life."



*We work closely with our fish and seafood suppliers, both mainstream and specialist. Our local teams are here to advise you on making the most sustainable seafood choices for your menus. Please contact them for assistance*

**Please contact your local Direct Seafoods depot with any seafood queries, and for information on daily landings, new products or assistance with menu planning.**  
[directseafoods.co.uk](http://directseafoods.co.uk)