

# CATCH-UP

## Winter 2022

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

## Direct Seafoods retains coveted MSC UK fresh fish foodservice supplier of the year award

Source (full article): [fishfocus.co.uk](https://fishfocus.co.uk)  
For the second year running, Direct Seafoods has been awarded the Marine Stewardship Council Award for Fresh Fish Foodservice Supplier of the Year.

Attended by a large number of industry members and streamed to many more, the award is considered of the highest regard across fresh fish foodservice and reflects the ultimate recognition to individuals and teams.



## Pacific bluefin tuna stock increasing

Source (full article): [fishfocus.co.uk](https://fishfocus.co.uk)  
**Pacific bluefin tuna stock increasing.** Following international action to end overfishing of Pacific bluefin tuna, a new stock assessment shows that the species is now increasing and includes many younger fish that will help accelerate its rebound.

The new assessment was presented at a recent plenary meeting of the International Scientific Committee for Tuna and Tuna-Like Species in the North Pacific Ocean (ISC).



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

## BUYER RECOMMENDS...

Good picks this season include:

- **Frozen 10/20 and 20/40 squid**
- **ChalkStream® trout**
- **Farmed sea bass**
- **Farmed halibut**
- **Roeless scallops**

## SOCIAL CATCH-UP... [@Direct\\_Seafoods](https://twitter.com/Direct_Seafoods)

## Space-based monitoring could be the key to sustainable fisheries

Source (full article): [fishfocus.co.uk](https://fishfocus.co.uk)  
Illegal fishing ships could soon have nowhere to hide, even at night, thanks to a satellite-based solution for maritime surveillance being developed by the University of Surrey and the Mauritius Research and Innovation Council (MRIC).

The Surrey Space Centre has been awarded funding by the Ocean Innovation Challenge, run by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), to design, develop and validate a nearly real-time monitoring tool able to detect illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (IUU) activities in the Mauritius Exclusive Economic Zone.



# FISH MARKET REPORT WINTER 2022

## OVERVIEW

Welcome to the winter 2022 newsletter which aims to cover the December to February period for the supply of fish. This is one of our more difficult periods for sourcing and availability due to poorer weather and the festive break. We are hopeful of a good trading period versus the last two years where the pandemic curtailed activity in our industry, but we are mindful that the current cost of living crisis is having an effect on disposable incomes which may dampen trade levels. Remember that your account manager is there for you to help navigate the best choices – whether that be using more value added lines to reduce kitchen labour, using longer life products to reduce wastage, or using our skilled fishmongers to prepare your fish so that it is pan ready.

Cold waters favour many of our native wild species, but the poorer weather conditions do not favour our fishermen. Inclement weather can reduce fishing effort and therefore available volumes. Reduction in available volumes means higher pricing. We also see some strong seasonal export demand over the festive period for certain species which inflates prices in the run up to Christmas. December is a short month for fishing activity. Boats will make their final landings before Christmas at the beginning of the week commencing 19th of December. Most fishing boats won't prepare to fish again until around the 6th of January 2023. For that reason, if you have not already done so, please contact your account manager to discuss requirements for any wild native species over the festive period. They will be able to advise you of any potential difficulties, offer alternatives, or even freeze some stock down for you to use nearer the time. Our last delivery day before Christmas is Saturday the 24th. We then re-open on Wednesday the 28th, with the last delivery day before New Year being Saturday the 31st of December. We then re-open on Tuesday the 3rd of January.

We are constantly looking for new ways to create value in our offering and have recently introduced some value added crab lines which are a great way to incorporate native UK crab into your menus without significant preparation time. These lines come frozen, but have been created by our fresh crab supplier in Devon so they are locally produced. We can offer potted Devon crab towers, Devon crab and wasabi terrines, Devon crab and smoked salmon parfaits, Devon crab arancini balls, and Devon crab gratin tarts. We think these lines work really well either as starters, or part of a buffet range. Contact your account manager to try some, and watch this space for more lines in 2023.

The Marine Conservation Society (MCS) Good Fish Guide updated their ratings in October 2022. Whilst there were not many significant movements, highlights included an improvement in the rating of black bellied monkfish from the south west of the UK. New data, which is more detailed than before, has shown that the populations in this area are very healthy. Cockles have also moved to a best choice as fishery management has proved that cockle populations are doing well. What is also positive is that the controls in place ensure that both habitats and the species that depend on cockles for food are protected. Coley ratings have also improved with the North Sea fish that were rated a 4 moving to a 3. This is great news for this value white fish.

We are delighted to say that, for the second year running, we have been awarded the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) Award for Fresh Fish Foodservice Supplier of the Year. This award is given to a supplier that has supported its customers in identifying new MSC products and species for restaurant businesses, while also demonstrating its commitment to driving progress of certified sustainable seafood within the U.K. foodservice sector. Read more about this in our round up of fish industry news above. We are also pleased to have been shortlisted for the FWD Green Wholesaler and Green Supplier gold medal 2022. This award recognises a supplier who has demonstrated commitment and results in the areas of carbon reduction, waste prevention, resource efficiency and sustainable sourcing. The award ceremony takes place on the 24th of November, so keep your fingers crossed for us!

In our autumn catch up, we were encouraging those of you who phone orders in or manually type out email orders to use our fresh food hub site – either the app or the web version. We have made some progress in improving the numbers of customers moving to this ordering method, but we still need more of you to do it! Special online only deals and incentives are available to those of you who sign up and use the ordering system. This is notwithstanding the other efficiencies including access to allergen data, copy invoices and order history. Speak to your account manager for more details.

It just remains for us to thank you all for your much valued custom in 2022. It's been another difficult year for our sector due to challenges with labour shortages, product shortages and inflation. We know how difficult it is for hospitality industry at the moment, and we want to assure you that we will always endeavour to be the supplier that you can rely on for quality, service, innovation and reliability – both to the end of 2022 and into 2023. Wishing each and every one of you a very successful and Merry Christmas and a happy and prosperous New Year.

Natalie Hudd, Director of Sales, Direct Seafoods.

## FARMED FISH

Species	Comments
<b>Sea Bass &amp; Gilthead Bream</b>	Prices have recently lowered a little due to a reduction in demand. In addition to this, some small independent farms are offering limited deals on whole fish. This has forced the larger farms to follow the trend. We expect this to be short term – probably to the end of December. Please note that the larger sea bass (800g+) are suffering with low biomass levels and have actually increased in price. Farmed sea bass and gilthead bream do continue to offer reasonable value in the current climate. These are great choices for the festive period as we do not usually experience challenges in availability. A reliable choice with the bream offering the better value of the two.
<b>Salmon</b>	Salmon is proving most difficult to estimate (for a change!). Norway's salmon biomass, i.e. the volume of fish in farms, is below that of last year. Experts say that this is due to increased exports of fish, but a reduction in fish being fed. Less biomass means less fish to harvest and lower volumes available on the market. Scarcity of product naturally means higher prices. Prices in the second half of October were unusually high for the time of year, and considerably higher than prior years. The cost of farming continues to rise and the 40% tax that the Norwegian government are planning to implement on farmers in January 2023 is a potential issue. One major producer is reported as having made hundreds of staff redundant in response to this tax, and this will inevitably affect supply lines and prices. Typically we see the prices sharply rise in the second half of December and remain firm throughout January. Last year we saw prices continuing to escalate to astronomical levels through February and well into the spring. All the above being said, a lack of demand due to a reduction in trade on the back of the cost of living crisis could see farmers struggling to attain the high prices we have seen in previous years. In the short term, we know and understand that this is a menu staple for the festive season – both fresh and smoked. Please just be aware that prices will be firm and likely to stay that way in January.
<b>Trout</b>	Sea reared trout has risen in price and is on a par with farmed salmon now. It's a lovely alternative, but will not offer a saving. UK farmed ChalkStream® trout should be stable in price until the end of December at least. This should present a saving against both salmon and sea reared trout, whilst also providing a sustainable menu option with UK provenance. The concerns over stock levels earlier in the year have abated somewhat, so we feel this could be a good option for both Christmas and January menus. Smaller rainbow trout are an issue at the moment. The farm that supplies the majority of our fish is closed until the middle of November to allow their biomass to recover and grow. This is putting pressure on supply, and prices have risen as a result. Not a hugely popular fish on menus unless hot smoked, and one to avoid in the short term.
<b>Halibut</b>	Halibut farms closed recently, as many of you are aware, to allow biomass to recover. This resulted in a massive shortage of fish and customers taking halibut off the menu. The issue that the farms are having since re-opening is that they are struggling to meet their sales targets. In order to encourage increased sales, they have reduced prices on some sizes. This is likely to be temporary and halibut is typically a popular fish around the festive period so demand is likely to increase. We would recommend that this could be a good choice for a premium spot on the menu. Halibut is a fabulously versatile fish that can be used to create a multitude of show stopping Christmas dishes. Any farmed fish is a wise option when fishing effort reduces, and this is one of the best.

## FARMED FISH

Species	Comments
<b>Other Farmed Species</b>	Farmed turbot prices are currently stable. They should remain steady over the forthcoming months and will offer a valuable alternative to wild turbot and brill when landings reduce towards the end of December and into the New Year. Smaller sizes present the best value. Meagre remains a good option for the winter. The 2-3kg fish yield chunky supremes and are a good alternative to wild sea bass. This fish has become so popular because its firm flesh renders it suitable for frying, baking, grilling, steaming, smoking or even marinating raw. It does not spoil easily as its moderate fat content makes it less susceptible to oxidation. This means that it is a really good choice over December and January when other wild species are in short supply due to lack of fishing, and the bank holidays see irregular supply lines. Definitely one to consider over the winter season.

## WILD FISH

Species	Comments
<b>Flat Fish</b>	We are entering a problematic time for some of our best loved flat fish. Plaice used to be a great value addition to any menu, but prices have risen excessively in recent years. Plaice go into their spawning season at the end of December for at least 3 months, and yields start to decline ahead of this period. This means that there is an increase in demand from frozen merchants as they put stock away before fish quality declines. Prices will be high as a result and this is one to avoid until April at the earliest. An increase in demand for lemon soles over the festive period and the reduction in fishing effort sees prices rise in December. Another one to avoid unless you have deep pockets. Dover sole prices are holding steady. We usually see a slight reduction in price in December, but export demand and a reduction in fishing due to fleets tying up is keeping prices firm. Megrim sole, which usually offer a good alternative to the more expensive UK flat fish, are also entering their spawning season which means that yields and quality will deteriorate. Turbot and brill availability will be hit and miss through December and into January. Prices on these premium flat fish have been high for months now and we don't expect this to change. There may be the odd opportunity to pick up some of the smaller sized fish for the occasional special. Larger fish (2kg+ brill and 3kg+ turbot) are prohibitively expensive. Speak to your account manager regarding availability.
<b>White Fish</b>	Prices for cod and haddock, whilst high, have not been excessive in recent weeks as a result of trade in the UK being flat. However, there is demand now from frozen merchants to secure the better quality winter catch frozen-at-sea haddock and large cod. The week commencing 19th of December will be the date of final imports for haddock and cod in 2022. Most fishing boats won't prepare to fish again until around the 6th of January. We will be covered for supplies of refreshed haddock and cod for the week in between Christmas and New Year, and the first week back after New Year. Quality should be good throughout the winter as the cold water strongly favours these species, but prices are usually very high through the second half of December through to the third week of January. Haddock prices tend to ease in February before they start spawning. Coley, hake and pollock suffer from spikes in export demand at this time of year. Hake prices have a tendency to rise by up to 70% in December so we strongly advise you to avoid until late January. There will be massive demand from the continent (Spain in particular) for these fish. Coley remains the cheapest of our native white fish, but recently prices have risen by circa 15%. Expect increases, but availability should be reasonable. Good news is that the MCS ratings have improved on coley. The worst rating is now a 3, with MSC accredited Icelandic fish the best choice with a rating of 1 (best choice).
<b>Round Fish</b>	Mackerel will disappear in December when the Scottish quota finishes. It should, therefore, not be on your core menus until the middle of January at the earliest. Those fish that are available will attract premium prices. Sardines will also be in short supply as poor weather conditions do not favour these fish. We do have excellent frozen alternatives available. Monkfish will be subject to seasonal demand throughout December. Prices will rise by up to 30% through the month reaching a peak just before Christmas. With the Scottish fleet late to return to fishing after Hogmanay, don't expect prices to ease until much later in January. Gurnards are now in their prime season. However, sadly, sustainability issues prevent any significant usage of this species. Grey gurnards are all MCS 4, yellow gurnards (tubs) are all MCS 5, and red gurnards are MCS 4 with the exception of otter trawled fish from the N.E. Atlantic. No changes to these ratings in the recent review so best to avoid.
<b>Cephalopods</b>	Sadly, the recent MCS ratings review saw no changes to all UK squid, cuttlefish and octopus. These species remain rated 4 and 5. Removing squid from menus is not easy as this much loved cephalopod is very popular as a starter on menus all across the UK. We do now have healthy stock of frozen small cleaned squid with tentacles in 10/20 and 20/40 gradings at competitive prices. This species is not rated by the MCS, so please do contact your account manager to list these on your menu. There are deals to be had on these lines.
<b>Exotics</b>	Demand in Europe for tuna and swordfish has reduced. Key suppliers expect this situation to continue for the remainder of the year, and this has been helped by sterling stabilising against the US dollar. Exotic species do not see the same levels of demand over Christmas as our native species, and supply lines are generally good. Tuna prices have reduced compared to previous months, and swordfish is stable. Both will be good options over forthcoming months.
<b>Shellfish</b>	With worsening and colder weather, reduced volumes of clams, cockles and razor clams are available. Quality will be good as bivalves are stronger in colder months, but there are likely to be price increases due to the reduction in availability. Clams from Poole will be MSC certified up until Christmas. At this point, the fishing method changes and they will not carry the certification until May. Mussels should be running really well, but lack of supply between Christmas and New Year due to shutdowns is usually an issue. Be prepared to accept frozen mussel substitutions during this time. There is seasonal demand for scallops during December and this sees the price of our native species rising by 20-25%. USA roeless scallops will be available as an alternative and we do not expect any change in price for these. Langoustine and lobster are also subject to increases in seasonal demand and we expect prices to rise on both. Providing that there are no severe weather issues in Canada / North America, supply lines of lobster should be uninterrupted. We expect the prices to continue to rise / stay high into next year as the seasons finish until the spring. The unseasonably warm weather we have had of late means that, unusually, we are still seeing availability of native lobsters. Expect prices to rise and availability to dry up if we start to see colder temperatures, but for now you may be able to pick up some deals. Talk to your account manager. Oysters are great quality at the moment. A popular species for Christmas and New Year, ensure you inform your account manager of your requirements as soon as you possibly can to ensure we fulfil your orders. With live shellfish, we try to carry minimal stock to avoid wastage and to guarantee freshness. As mentioned in the overview, we have some new value added crab lines available. We recommend these as a fantastic low labour, high quality menu option. Live crabs are very expensive currently, but crab meat should not see any changes in price through the winter. Be aware that, between Christmas and New Year, we will only have pasteurised crab meat. This is because the short shelf life on unpasteurised and the processing factory shut down until January, will see supply lines interrupted. Brown shrimps have reduced in price due to improved landings.

## SMOKED, DELI & FROZEN FISH

Species	Comments
<b>Smoked Fish</b>	Smoked salmon prices have recently increased in response to price rises on whole fish. Prices will remain high in December due to the strong demand for smoked salmon at this time of year. Like fresh salmon, the ongoing price will be determined by trade levels. There is a chance that a dip in requirement due to the cost of living crisis could depress prices, but we recommend you legislate for a worst case scenario of prices being extremely high until February at least. That being said, our variety of available cures are great for festive menus. Speak to your account manager about the available range. Hot smoked trout is on the increase due to the biomass issues at one of the major UK farms. However, we still believe that these fillets are cost effective compared to some other species, and there are some frozen options which can be used as alternatives. We are currently seeing poor availability on larger haddock, so smoked haddock prices are likely to remain firm until next year.



