

CATCH-UP

Winter 2021

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



directseafoods.co.uk

Direct Seafoods named MSC fresh fish food service supplier of the year

Source (full article): fishfocus.co.uk

Direct Seafoods named MSC Fresh Fish Food Service Supplier of the Year. Direct Seafoods is proud to have won the Marine Stewardship Council Award for Fresh Fish Food Service Supplier of the Year 2021, recognising its commitment to sustainability, and the diverse range of products offered across the full range of hospitality and food service businesses.

Direct Seafoods is a national fish supplier made up of 11 regional fishmongers, working directly with fishing ports around the coast of Britain and overseas fisheries, supplying thousands of chefs and food service businesses.

The MSC Award recognises Direct Seafoods' decision to put sustainability at the heart of its business. The company offers one of the largest ranges of MSC certified products, with more than 160 individual lines, along with support including menu planning, recipes, training and regular market updates.



Climate change double-whammy could kill - off fish species

Source (full article): fishfocus.co.uk

Climate change double-whammy could kill-off fish species. Many commonly-eaten fish could face extinction as warming oceans due to climate change increases pressure on their survival while also hampering their ability to adapt.

New research suggests that fish like sardines, pilchards and herring will struggle to keep pace with accelerating climate change as warmer waters reduce their size, and therefore their ability to relocate to more suitable environments.

The study, published in Nature Climate Change, also provides the first evidence to counter the scientific theory that decreased movement will result in more species, by suggesting the opposite is true. This means many species will also be less able to evolve to cope with warmer temperatures, increasing their risk of dying out.

BUYER RECOMMENDS...

Good picks this season include:

- **Gilthead Bream**
- **ChalkStream® trout**
- **Halibut**
- **Red Gurnard**
- **Swordfish**

SOCIAL CATCH-UP...

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

Brits are demanding sustainable fish

Source (full article): fishfocus.co.uk

Brits are demanding sustainable fish with their chips..... they want more help choosing too.

With staycations now the norm, many Brits are craving nostalgic experiences like fish and chips on the seafront. But although we're all keen for a return to better times; what's expected inside the chip wrapper is evolving, according to new research by the Norwegian Seafood Council. And as sustainable fish rises up the agenda, diners are demanding greater transparency, helping them to make the right decisions when they're choosing from a menu.

The UK continues to be a nation of fish and chip lovers. More than a third of Brits tuck into them once a week or more, and 65% partake at least once a month. Environment is key for this highly evocative dish: 62% of respondents prefer fish and chips straight out of the packaging – 46% with their fingers. And almost a quarter (24%) of diners like to dig in on the beach.

But there's strong consensus when it comes to sustainability: nearly 9 out of 10 diners (87%) agreed that sustainable fish is important to them. Despite this, only a quarter (24%) said they knew what to look for when it came to sustainable fish in a fish and chip shop, and the majority (53%) aren't even sure they can tell the difference between cod and haddock.

FISH MARKET REPORT Winter 2021

OVERVIEW

Welcome to the winter newsletter which aims to cover the December to February period for the supply of fish. At the time of writing we are still living with a huge amount of uncertainty where supply lines are concerned. There are still shipment delays, and container prices remain at historic highs. Fuel prices are increasing. The cost of packaging is increasing. UK transport rates are also increasing at the beginning of December which will have an impact on just about everything we buy. Fish prices continue to spiral upwards which we know is causing a huge amount of pain. Sadly, with what seems to be a global labour shortage on the back of the pandemic, the cost of processing and delivering fish and seafood is escalating. These costs are inevitably passed on down the line and there is only so much we are able to wear with our own costs rising exponentially. We are hoping that the bubble will burst soon, but can only encourage that you discuss options with your account managers as to how we can potentially mitigate some of these increases. This could include reducing portion size, being flexible with species selection, using our online ordering system to place your orders, or making more use of specials.

As we approach the festive period, there will be a huge amount of speculation over the levels of trade we can all expect. This may be an ever changing picture depending on infection rates, but we are hopeful of something resembling normal when compared to last year which was, of course, a non-event. We would normally encourage that any wild fish requirement is discussed with your account manager in the autumn months with a view to sourcing and freezing down early. We understand that there may have been reticence to do this given the continued uncertainty. However, as is always the case, fishing effort reduces over the Christmas period and into the New Year. This will see shortages on some wild fish lines so be prepared for substitutions or lack of availability if requirements have not been advised with plenty of notice.

Please note that Christmas and New Year fall over weekends this year which sees our business closed from the 25th to the 28th of December 2021 inclusive, and the 1st to the 3rd of January 2022 inclusive. We fully appreciate that planning for longer periods without deliveries can be challenging, but your account managers are here to help you with this. There won't be any deliveries of fresh fish into us during these days so we strongly encourage some planning in advance to assist us in fulfilling your requirements.

The Marine Conservation Society (MCS) ratings have recently been updated. Unfortunately, there have been a number of species down rated. For those of you with strict guidelines over using 1-3 rated species only, a review will be necessary. The main issues are that Canadian and USA lobsters have moved from not being rated to red rated "avoid" (5). All native (UK) squid is now red rated. The majority of sources of monkfish have been downgraded to a 4, including all Scottish sources. More caution will need to be exercised here. Very sadly, UK caught coley has been downgraded from a 2 to a 4. Those of you who read this market report regularly will know that we champion coley on a regular basis due to being a low cost and sustainable alternative. We hope to make Icelandic coley more regularly available which remains rated a 1, so watch this space!

The winter sees a good variety of wild fish at prime quality as the colder waters favour a number of species. It is the changeable weather, increased demand and the lack of fishing effort over the holiday season that typically creates higher prices and shortages. Cod and haddock quota was cut this year so there is less fish to catch in 2021. Many Scottish boats are nearing the end of their quota now which will create price pressure. As a result of our exit from the EU, UK boats still don't have access to the Norway sector for cod, haddock, hake, pollock and coley. This has been a real problem. Conversely, the Norway boats don't have access to our sector for pelagic species. We are hopeful that a deal will be agreed early next year which will help.

With regards to frozen lines, all the major processors, including China and Vietnam, are still struggling with production speed versus demand. Ports are still congested and we are paying a lot in demurrage. Demurrage is a charge imposed by a shipping line to the consignee if the container isn't cleared and returned to a designated empty depot in the agreed timeframe. With the current delays, this is a real issue. Additionally, there is still power rationing in China which further slows production.

Whilst there is not much good news in the above, we can only presume that things can only get better! With that in mind, we'd like to thank you all for your continued loyalty and support through another very difficult year. Wishing each and every one of you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Onwards and upwards in 2022!

Natalie Hudd, Director of Sales, Direct Seafoods.

FARMED FISH

Species	Comments
Sea Bass & Gilthead Bream	Sea bass has been subject to high demand and prices have increased substantially over recent months. We are hopeful that prices can't go any higher – although the larger size (600-800g) is still under pressure. It is worth considering switching to using two smaller fillets in place of a single main course sized fillet in order to mitigate the increase. Gilthead bream has been far more stable in price and is a much better option in the current climate. ASC and Global GAP certified, bream is a lovely versatile fish whether baked, fried, grilled or steamed. Both bass and bream have also seen increases as a result of the change in paperwork requirements since the UK left the EU. In short, there was a huge issue when a large consignment was rejected due to a minor issue with the paperwork. All the fish was returned to source at which point it had perished. The producers are, therefore, leveraging a charge to cover their costs in the event that this happens again.
Salmon	Salmon has been increasing in recent weeks. There has been a levelling out at the beginning of November, but it is widely predicted that that prices will go up again in the run up to Christmas and stay firm in 2022 due to continued strong demand. Additionally, farmers have harvested to their "target" for the year. As the weather is cooler now, the fish will not be as active. This means that they require less feed, there is lower chance of disease and the farmers can slaughter fewer fish. Therefore, as the demand increases and there are less volume, the prices will go up. We are also seeing issues with the supply of Loch Duart salmon. Both Loch Duart and the majority of Scottish fish farmers lost significant amounts of stock due to warmer water temperatures over the recent months. They have very little fish to get through until the end of the year which has created high prices.
Trout	Sea reared trout from both Norway and Scotland has been more stable than salmon in price and could be a good alternative – although if the volume requirement for this becomes too significant then it tends to follow the salmon price. Our UK farmed ChalkStream® trout is another superb alternative. Any increases you may have seen recently are mainly due to increased transport costs. We would recommend you try this fish if you haven't already. It ticks a number of boxes in terms of being local and sustainable. Both Global GAP certified and RSPCA assured, it is rated a 2 by the Marine Conservation Society. Speak to your account manager to arrange an order and we should be able to fix a price for you through to the end of the year. Smaller rainbow trout will also be readily available. Although these fish have recently increased in price due to the rise in processing costs, they should now be stable for a few months and are all farmed in the UK which negates any import charges or issues. Trout isn't very well favoured in the UK when compared to salmon, but in times such as these, the consumers need to open their minds more than ever to a broader range of fish and seafood species.
Halibut	We experienced a shortage of halibut at the beginning of the autumn, but fish are running quite well now. Exercise caution on the larger 7-9kg size where the price has risen on the back of reduced availability. Farmed halibut occupies the premium end of the farmed fish range. Fish are rated a 2 or 3 by the Marine Conservation Society as opposed to wild fish which are all a 5 – fish to avoid. A beautiful fish that you can offer with confidence at a time of year when fishing effort typically reduces. If you are thinking of wild turbot or brill for a Christmas or New Year menu, you would be well advised to consider halibut instead for greater reliability and better yields. We also have availability on Glitne halibut from Norway which is farmed to a very high standard on land, in large raceway systems. The pools are built of stones, wood and recyclable material. Ask your account manager for more detail.

FARMED FISH cont

Species	Comments
Other Farmed Species	Farmed turbot prices continue on an upward trend. We are now in a scenario where we are seeing shortages due to a combination of low biomass and high demand. This is in addition to the increased import costs we have seen over the last few months. Farmed turbot simply are not cost effective at present. Whilst they are more sustainable than their wild counterparts, they are not good value for money currently. Meagre prices have been on the increase as farms run out of the larger 3-4kg sizes. The 2-3kg fish are more plentiful so could be a good option over the festive period for those of you seeking something a bit different. A good alternative to a large sea bass as they are rated a 3 by the Marine Conservation Society.

WILD FISH

Species	Comments
Flat Fish	Flat fish begins to get a bit tricky now. Plaice yields start to deteriorate at the end of November and will roe up towards the end of December before going out of season between January and March. Plaice have been very expensive all year. We don't expect further increases over the next quarter, but the quality simply won't be there so please avoid. Lemon soles will be better quality, but fewer landings and greater demand will see high prices through December and well into January. Lemon soles from the South West are now rated a 4 by the Marine Conservation Society so should be used with caution, whereas North Sea lemon soles are rated a 3. In any event, we tend to rely on Iceland supply during the winter for good size lemon soles. Dover soles have been making astronomical prices at auction in recent months. We would normally expect a reduction in price in December, but these are not normal times. They remain a fish for those with deep pockets only. Megrim sole should be available during the winter season and is a good value option for those of you able to entice your customers to try a different species of flat fish. Wild turbot are fetching high prices currently and we expect this to continue into the festive season as fishing is affected by poorer weather and demand for this prime fish increases.
White Fish	Cod and haddock have been making never seen before prices over the last quarter. This is not helped by other European countries accepting and paying higher rates which keeps prices extremely buoyant. Couple this with the cuts in quota on both species and we seem a long way away from the prices we saw pre-pandemic. Large cod prices have eased very slightly in recent weeks, but historical trends tell us that this could easily go the other way in the month of December. Quality is great, but there is no getting away from the fact that these UK favourites are not as cost effective as we would like. We tend to see shortages over the festive period and into the New Year, so consider using previously frozen options which will help with both availability and price. As mentioned in the overview, our UK caught coley has sadly been down rated by the Marine Conservation Society to a 4. Only MSC certified fish from the North East Arctic and Icelandic waters are rated a 1, with Faroese and net caught fish from the North East Arctic rated a 2. We are working on achieving a regular supply of Icelandic coley. Until we are able to secure this, please exercise caution when using North Sea caught fish. The price for coley is likely to be a little higher in December and early January due to increased demand as a result of high cod and haddock prices. Hake has been difficult for most of this year – partially due to increased popularity and rising demand, and partially due to our inability to access the Norway sector for the fish as a result of Brexit. In 2019 and 2018, we saw hake reaching exorbitant prices in December and through January, so we predict similar increases this quarter. There may also be sporadic availability when the weather is bad.
Round Fish	Scottish boats stop fishing for mackerel at the end of November so you can expect fish to be scarce throughout December and prices to be high. This should start easing mid-way through January. Gurnard are a great winter fish and prices tend to improve as we go into the season. However, gurnard are variable in terms of sustainability. Grey gurnard are rated a 4 and yellow gurnard are rated a 5. It's only red gurnard that are rated a 3 unless beam trawled from Cornwall. A great choice if you are able to negate the poorer rated origins / species. Monkfish are a really popular choice for festive menus and this sees some really high prices in December. Scottish fleets returning to fishing late in the New Year sees prices stay firm until the end of January. Combine this with the recent sustainability downgrade, and they are not a good choice. All Scottish caught fish are now rated a 4, and a number of South West fisheries are also rated a 4. The best case scenario is a 3 rating. A real difficult one to navigate. Sardines tend to be hit and miss this time of year, but there are some good quality frozen options to use if you are keen to have these on your menu.
Cephalopods	We are getting to the stage of wanting to remove this section from the market report due to the sustainability concerns around UK species. UK octopus is rated a 4 or 5. UK Cuttlefish is rated a 4 or 5. UK squid is rated a 4 or 5. The reality of this is that you cannot serve any of these species if you aspire to being more sustainable in your menu choices. Even the frozen squid tubes we predominantly sell which used to be rated a 2 are now under review. No recommendations here, although this typically would be the best time of year for our native species. If you are using squid, it would be best to stick to frozen tubes which, whilst under review, are not yet confirmed to be at the bottom end of the rating scale.
Exotics	Both swordfish and tuna should be available and stable throughout the next quarter. There are continued issues with sustainability of tuna which does present an issue. Swordfish is a better option with a 3 rating. Whilst the price is a little firmer at the moment, swordfish will be a good option as we do not anticipate availability issues or further increases in price.
Shellfish	Mussels are well in season currently and will be for the rest of the winter as the cooler weather favours these sustainable bivalves. Prices are up on prior years but they are still exceptionally good value. Historically we see issues with continuity of supply around the Christmas and New Year period. If you are planning to use live mussels on your menu through this time, then please advise us of your requirement well in advance to avoid a shortage. Oysters are also popular around this time and are in their peak season for quality. Again, if you have a requirement for a specific type of oyster for your festive menu, then do let us know as soon as you can. Canadian lobsters prices have been extremely firm for several months now. The new season begins at the end of November. More supply in the market should see prices level out, but we don't expect them to drop to the levels we were used to seeing two years ago. Native lobsters are out of season in the winter, so do not expect these to be a good alternative when the Canadian season finishes at the end of December for three months. Crab meat prices are going up again in December due to continuing issues with staffing at the crab factories and lack of product to process. Our core supplier doesn't expect normal availability until spring 2022. Bear this in mind if you are thinking of using crab on a regular spot on the menu. USA scallops have been under continuing pressure for many months now. There is huge demand for these throughout the EU and within the USA. Fishing was disrupted due to COVID and demand is constantly outstripping supply. The three month closure of scallop fishing grounds in the South West of the UK earlier this year did not help native supply, so it's not a much better picture here. Our native scallops are always in demand over the festive period so we expect prices to be high.

SMOKED, DELI & FROZEN FISH

Species	Comments
Smoked Fish	Smoked fish pricing is generally up across the range of products we offer due to increases in the raw fish prices combined with the surge in processing costs. This has been evident in smoked mackerel, smoked trout, kippers and smoked haddock. Our festive favourite – smoked salmon – will also be affected as the fresh fish price increases and demand grows. Our preferred smokehouse has been under immense pressure with staff shortages – a problem that does not look likely to go away in the short term. That being said, our smoked products typically carry a good shelf life. This means you can avoid wastage issues and put these on the menu with some confidence throughout the Christmas and New Year period by holding a small amount of stock. As always, we carry a range of more unusual salmon cures in addition to the traditional lines for the more adventurous. Try orange and tarragon, whisky and dill, stout, treacle, or gin cures. We would ask for a little more notice for orders of these speciality cures whilst there is a labour shortage. Speak to your account manager for more information.

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
Deli	It feels like the increases we have seen in most deli lines are starting to level out. Brexit has probably had more of an effect on these lines than any others due to the origins of the products and the varying processing locations. Subsequently, most lines were affected by the increases in the price of logistics. Like our smoked lines, deli products offer a good shelf life to carry you through the festive period. Crayfish in brine should now be stable in price after a few increases as should our various roes (keta / trout / lumpfish / avruga). These roes can really add to a dish at a lower cost than sturgeon caviar, so worth using as a garnish on your festive menus.
Frozen Fish	The frozen fish industry has really struggled with maintaining consistency of supply when faced with reduced processing capacity at sites around the globe due to COVID, horrific container costs, demurrage, and delays due to HGV driver shortages when product finally hits the UK. Our frozen smoked mackerel and smoked haddock supplier has actually pulled out of supplying foodservice due to being unable to operate profitably. This has meant we have had to seek an alternative with very little notice. The result is that prices have had to rise until such a time that we are able to source a better value option. Our aim throughout these shortages has been to ensure continuation of supply, but this does sometimes come with an increased cost. There has also been a significant increase in the cost of octopus due to prices rising in Morocco as a result of strong global demand, lower catches, higher operating costs and higher transport costs. Our value added breaded and battered lines have also increased in recent months due to contract prices ending and the new rates being far higher. This also affects fish cakes and fish fingers. Reduced production and increased demand is also hitting warm water prawn prices. This has been in a fairly small way so far, but we expect more issues in the New Year. Prices are unlikely to ease until the summer of 2022 if at all. With cod and haddock quota down by circa 20%, there may be further increases on IQF fillets in 2022. This will be very dependent on the level of demand for the product. Most of you will have also seen issues in frozen squid supplies. We are getting product but the speed of processing is not keeping up with demand. This will remain difficult in early 2022 due to Chinese New Year, but could improve by next summer. It is worth considering that countries around the globe are desperate to secure product for Christmas which is driving prices up. We may see an easing in the New Year, but it's too early to tell.

'World's most expensive' bluefin tuna fish jump out of water on British coast

Source (full article): [independent.co.uk](https://www.independent.co.uk)

A group of Atlantic bluefin tuna, renowned for being the world's most expensive fish, were caught on camera launching themselves into the air off the coast of Cornwall.

The fish are renowned for more than just their acrobatics, with a high market value that sees them sell for thousands – and even millions – of pounds.

Eat seafood to help save the planet, scientists urge

Source (full article): [fishfarmermagazine.com](https://www.fishfarmermagazine.com)

Around 100 of the world's leading scientific researchers have called on people to eat more fish, to help solve some of the planet's environmental and societal challenges – and they predict that aquaculture will lead the way in this endeavour.

Commissioned by the Stockholm Resilience Centre, Stanford University and the Norwegian food organisation EAT, the researchers come from more than 25 international scientific institutions

They have been assessing the importance of seafood in ensuring healthy, fair and sustainable food systems in the future.

Producing a series of scientific articles under the title Blue Food Assessment, they predict demand is going to double.



UK steps up fight against 'incredibly cruel' shark fin trade

Source (full article): [independent.co.uk](https://www.independent.co.uk)

A new ban will on imports and exports of detached shark fins forms part of a conservation drive.



Importing and exporting detached shark fins is set to be banned as part of a conservation drive.

Record prices at Grimsby Fish Market as cost of fish and chips set to rise 'at least 10 per cent'

Source (full article): [yorkshirepost.co.uk](https://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk)

Imports of cod and haddock have fetched record prices at one of the country's most important markets, with a knock-on impact in the supply chain, including the cost of fish and chips.

The Humber has the country's largest concentration of fish processors, with fish and chip shop staples, cod and haddock, delivered to Grimsby Fish Market fresh in containers from Norway and Iceland.

Our online ordering platform, powered by the fresh food hub, enables you to manage your account online. Existing customers are able to register and it only takes a few minutes!. Please contact your account manager 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](https://www.directseafoods.co.uk)

