



AN t-ÚDARÁS UM  
CHOSAINT  
IASCAIGH MHARA

SEA-FISHERIES  
PROTECTION  
AUTHORITY

# Protecting Seafood Trade 2023



BIA MARA SÁBHÁILTE INBHUNAITHE  
SAFE SUSTAINABLE SEAFOOD

## CONTENTS

02 Chair's Welcome

---

03 Introduction

---

05 Trade Flows of Fish and Fishery  
Products Certified

---

06 Export Health Certificates

---

07 Exports

---



*Ireland as a food exporting nation places significant emphasis on our position as a supplier of safe, traceable, sustainably produced high-quality food. Seafood is a valuable part of this offering.*

---

# Chair's Welcome

I am pleased to welcome you to the Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority (SFPA) 'Protecting Seafood Trade 2023'. This publication aims to highlight the important work the SFPA carries out on behalf of the State and our Seafood sector in protecting and enabling the import and export of seafood.

Ireland, as a food exporting nation, places significant emphasis on our position as a supplier of safe, traceable, sustainably produced high-quality food. Seafood is a valuable part of this offering. The SFPA as a regulator is conscious of our role in ensuring the integrity of our seafood and strategically in terms of how Ireland's reputation as a food exporter of choice is dependent on all links in the chain.

The SFPA's Trade Compliance unit, supported by our Sea-Fisheries Protection Officers (SFPOs) across the country, works tirelessly to support our seafood producers to enable export internationally and the functioning of our seafood production supply chains. Brexit and the emergence of the UK as a Third Country have led to increased demands on the SFPA. I am encouraged in how the organisation has risen to this challenge and helped to maintain the movement of seafood products without significant disruption.

2023 was a challenging year for Ireland's Seafood Sector with the continuing repercussions from Brexit, the fallout from the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the energy crisis and the cost-of-living crisis creating a challenging trading environment. This was reflected in the decrease in third country exports from Ireland to 49,782 tonnes and 23 species from 44 Food Businesses to 41 countries outside the EU in 2023 from 78,171 tonnes in 2022.

The purpose of this report is not to provide an economic insight into seafood trade, rather to lay out the raw data in terms of imports and exports as managed by the SFPA. Nonetheless, the information provided in the Protecting Seafood Trade Report 2023 offers useful analysis of the key trends facing the sector at this present time and highlights an important element of our activity as a regulator. I trust you will find this new report a valuable resource.



**Paschal Hayes**

EXECUTIVE CHAIRPERSON

# Introduction



## €550 million

**Irish seafood exports in 2023.  
Representing a decline in value  
of 14% over the previous year<sup>1</sup>**

As Ireland's competent Authority for seafood trade compliance, the SFPA undertakes a range of activities critical to enabling our seafood economy. Irish seafood exports in 2023 were valued at €550 million, representing a decline in value of 14% over the previous year<sup>1</sup>. Protecting seafood trade via ensuring highly functioning levels of regulatory assurance is a critical element of our mission as the Authority responsible for ensuring the international integrity of Ireland's seafood offering.

In 2023, in addition to routine engagement with multi-agency and industry stakeholders, the SFPA actively assisted industry in preparing for and dealing with the regulatory and supply chain impact on Irish seafood companies trading with the UK and vessels fishing in UK waters as the regulatory landscape with the UK began to settle following its exit from the EU and transition to a Third Country.

Active management by the Authority of new risks arising from the UK's status as a stand-alone contracting party to the North-East Atlantic Fishing Commission (NEAFC) and as a third country with respect to Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing, continued to be necessary.

These control and enforcement requirements were manifest in managing consignment trade and vessel direct landings between Ireland and the UK.

The Authority continued to maintain its certification and control regimes in response to the ongoing challenges brought by changes in trading patterns, risks and opportunities for Irish seafood companies. The SFPA continued to liaise with overseas control agencies and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and DAFM officials on a wide range of seafood market access and technical support issues. Export markets on which access and support work was actively conducted during the year included: South Korea; Japan; China; United Arab Emirates; Vietnam; USA, Canada, and the Gulf States.

The Authority introduced a revised export health certificate arrangement for export of brown crab to China which facilitated normalisation of trade levels for live and processed brown crab exports and amended the previous regulatory regime that was in place since 2019.

<sup>1</sup> Figures taken from Bord Bia's Sector Summary - Seafood January 2024.

## KEY ENGAGEMENTS DURING 2023 INCLUDED



### Revised export health certification protocol

Agreement with Chinese import authorities of a revised export health certification protocol to provide assurance on Ireland's exports of live and processed brown crab to China resulting in facilitation of export trade to high-demand Chinese market in a manner that assures strong regulatory oversight of this trade.



### Regulatory vigilance

Regulatory vigilance following the departure of the UK from the EU and the future trading relationship. This included national and EU co-operation and cross-agency collaboration with regulatory partner organisations and agencies to examine and prepare for food safety and fishery control implications.



### Internal capacity building

Internal capacity building within the organisation including clarification of technical requirements, contingency planning, communication, and liaison with other key stakeholders on fisheries regulatory preparedness for the UK exit from the EU regulatory regime and common market.



### Information seminars

Design and delivery of trade information seminars for industry trading with UK in addition to leading individualised regulatory engagement and preparation conversations with diverse external stakeholder groupings.



### Seafood safety

Continued organisational involvement with seafood relevant areas of the work of the Codex Alimentarius Commission.



### Updating organisational certification

Updating organisational certification and oversight regimes in response to the introduction of revised foundational EU food safety official controls regulation.

The SFPA developed its work in seafood trade regulation, provision of technical market access support, performing official controls in disciplines including company and product registration and certification, seafood safety and sea-fisheries conservation. Implementation and enforcement by the Authority of EU official control regulation and fisheries conservation legislation continue to act as the regulatory baselines upon which Ireland's robust seafood certification system is built.

Inspections and health certification of export consignments were delivered in order to continue to provide public health and customer assurance regarding seafood safety and quality standards that are expected in international food markets and underpinned by EU regulations.

**Bernard O'Donovan**

NATIONAL DIRECTOR TRADE COMPLIANCE

# Trade Flows of Fish and Fishery Products Certified

Official controls in the deterrence of Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing continued to be conducted. This included the verification of 2,498 catch certificates relating to the import of 11,301 tonnes of produce from all third countries, including the UK. This represented respective decreases over 2022 data of 12% and 3% in the amount of import certificates and import tonnage verified, reflecting reduced trade volumes of imports returning closer to 2020 levels.

## 19,187 tonnes

**of Irish seafood export-certified in line with illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing regulations.**

The main countries from which import consignments originated were UK, Iceland, China, Ecuador and India. Imports from UK accounted for 46% and 22% in the respective overall amounts of certificates issued and tonnage imported from all third countries. 744 catch certificates were issued for the export of 19,187 tonnes of Irish seafood produce to third countries, including the UK. The main species exported by volume were Atlantic Mackerel, Atlantic Horse Mackerel, Edible Crab and Sprat. This represented a respective increase over 2022 data of 8% and 99% in the amount of export catch certificates issued and related export tonnage catch certified reflecting a return to 2021 levels. Exports to UK accounted for 61% of the total number of certificates issued.

## 56,731 tonnes

**of produce imported from non-EU fishing vessels into Ireland.**

A total of 609 direct landings of fishery products by non-EU fishing vessels into Ireland resulted in the import of 56,731 tonnes of produce. This represented a respective decrease over 2022 data of 13% and 24%. Landings by UK-registered vessels accounted for 97% of the overall total number of landings by non-EU fishing vessels into Ireland. Irish vessels landed 356 times into third country ports, accounting for exports of 19,650 tonnes of produce, with 95% of landings taking place in UK ports.



*Landings by UK-registered vessels accounted for 97% of the overall total number of landings by non-EU fishing vessels into Ireland.*



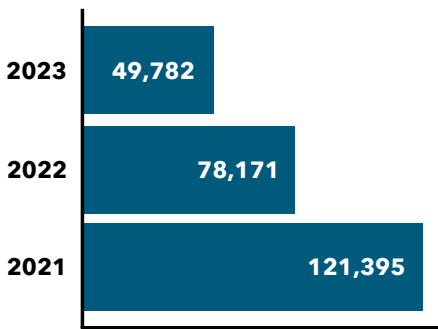
# Export Health Certificates

\* Please note all the weights in this section refer to the product as exported and may not reflect the species live weight.

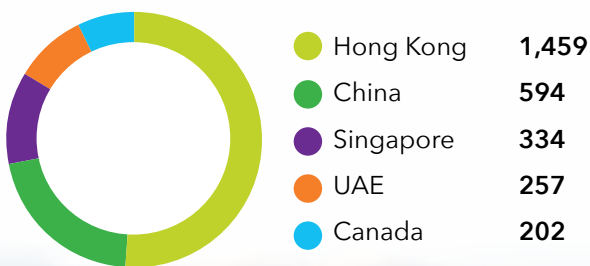
A total of 3,802 consignments of seafood totalling 49,782 Tonnes and 23 species were certified for export from 44 Food Businesses to 41 countries outside the EU in 2023.

This compares with a total of 3,670 consignments of seafood totalling 78,171 Tonnes and 26 species which were certified for export from 47 Food Businesses to 48 countries outside the EU in 2022. In 2021, a total of 4,455 consignments of seafood totalling 121,395 Tonnes and 25 species which were certified for export from 48 Food Businesses to 42 countries outside the EU.\*

**Figure 1: Certified seafood exports outside of EU (tonnes)**



**Figure 2: Top 5 Countries - Consignments Certified**



**Table 1: Consignments certified**

| Countries                 | Tonnes        | Consignments |
|---------------------------|---------------|--------------|
| Nigeria                   | 17,564        | 87           |
| China                     | 6,904         | 594          |
| Ivory Coast               | 5,213         | 16           |
| Egypt                     | 3,054         | 29           |
| Japan                     | 2,919         | 78           |
| Congo                     | 2,700         | 12           |
| Ghana                     | 2,401         | 45           |
| Vietnam                   | 1,917         | 106          |
| Ukraine                   | 1,010         | 55           |
| Korea, Republic Of        | 874           | 57           |
| Lithuania                 | 768           | 9            |
| Cameroon                  | 759           | 5            |
| Hong Kong                 | 752           | 1,459        |
| Liberia                   | 625           | 10           |
| United Arab Emirates      | 330           | 257          |
| United States             | 280           | 15           |
| Taiwan, Province of China | 268           | 27           |
| Togo                      | 225           | 3            |
| Benin                     | 201           | 8            |
| Reunion                   | 178           | 4            |
| Sierra Leone              | 150           | 2            |
| Malaysia                  | 141           | 199          |
| Jamaica                   | 137           | 8            |
| Canada                    | 118           | 202          |
| Singapore                 | 84            | 334          |
| Thailand                  | 40            | 57           |
| Philippines               | 30            | 56           |
| Indonesia                 | 25            | 1            |
| Others                    | 116           | 67           |
| <b>Total</b>              | <b>49,782</b> | <b>3,802</b> |

# Exports

## Top Three Export Destinations

Three countries account for 59.6% of Irish Seafood exported to third countries outside the EU in 2023: Nigeria 35.3%, China 13.9%, and Ivory Coast 10.4%

Exports to these three destinations Nigeria, China and Ivory Coast were primarily pelagic species, as set out in the tables below.

**Table 2: Exports to Nigeria**

| Species         | Tonnes        |
|-----------------|---------------|
| Mackerel        | 10,224        |
| Blue Whiting    | 6,926         |
| Herring         | 413           |
| Pacific Oysters | 1             |
| <b>Total</b>    | <b>17,564</b> |

**Table 3: Exports to China**

| Species         | Tonnes       |
|-----------------|--------------|
| Mackerel        | 4,309        |
| Blue Whiting    | 780          |
| Whelk           | 600          |
| Horse Mackerel  | 553          |
| Prawns          | 234          |
| Razor Clams     | 173          |
| Pacific Oysters | 124          |
| Crab            | 94           |
| Whiting         | 23           |
| Other           | 14           |
| <b>Total</b>    | <b>6,904</b> |

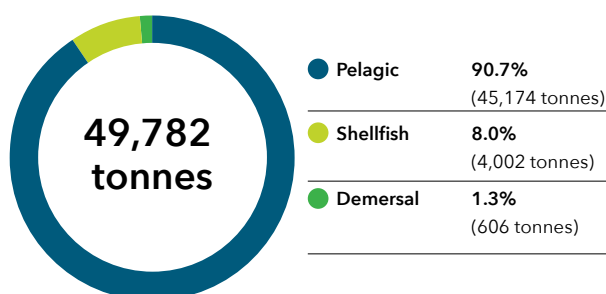
**Table 4: Exports to Ivory Coast**

| Species      | Tonnes       |
|--------------|--------------|
| Blue Whiting | 4,963        |
| Sole         | 250          |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>5,213</b> |

## Exports by Species Class

In 2023 the vast majority (90.7%) of seafood exported consisted of pelagic species including Mackerel, Blue Whiting, and Horse Mackerel. Shellfish exports made up 8% of exports and mostly included Whelk, Pacific Oysters, Razor Clams, Crab and Prawn exports. Round Fish and Demersal species comprised 1.3% of exports, mostly Sole and Salmon.

**Figure 3: Exports by Class**



**Table 5: Pelagic Species**

| Pelagic        | Tonnes        |
|----------------|---------------|
| Mackerel       | 23,899        |
| Blue Whiting   | 16,623        |
| Horse Mackerel | 3,796         |
| Herring        | 582           |
| Sardines       | 225           |
| Sprat          | 49            |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>45,174</b> |

**Table 6: Shellfish Species**

| Shellfish       | Tonnes       |
|-----------------|--------------|
| Whelk           | 2,009        |
| Razor Clams     | 688          |
| Pacific Oysters | 547          |
| Crab            | 370          |
| Prawns          | 293          |
| Mussels         | 57           |
| Lobster         | 24           |
| Scallops        | 14           |
| Others          | < 1          |
| <b>Total</b>    | <b>4,002</b> |

**Table 7: Round Fish and Demersal**

| Roundfish    | Tonnes     |
|--------------|------------|
| Sole         | 250        |
| Salmon       | 190        |
| Whiting      | 90         |
| Hake         | 76         |
| Others       | < 1        |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>606</b> |

90.7%

of seafood exports  
in 2023 consisted  
of pelagic species

# Exports (continued)

# 16,623 tonnes

of Blue Whiting exports to third countries  
in 2023 of which 41.7% went to Nigeria.



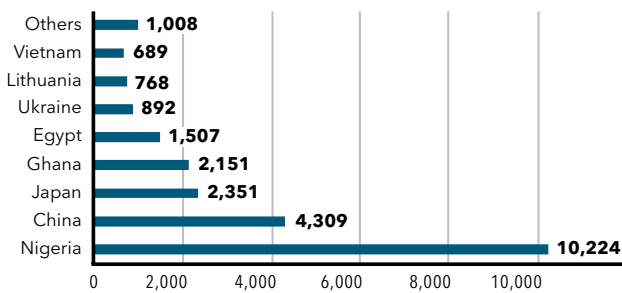
## Exports of Mackerel

A total of 23,899 Tonnes of Mackerel was exported to various third countries in 2023. Almost all of this was frozen Mackerel (95.2%) with small amounts of smoked and canned Mackerel being exported.

**Table 8: Exports of Mackerel by Country and Weight**

| Country      | Tonnes        |
|--------------|---------------|
| Nigeria      | 10,224        |
| China        | 4,309         |
| Japan        | 2,351         |
| Ghana        | 2,151         |
| Egypt        | 1,507         |
| Ukraine      | 892           |
| Lithuania    | 768           |
| Vietnam      | 689           |
| Others       | 1,008         |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>23,899</b> |

**Figure 4: Mackerel Exports (tonnes)**



**Table 9: Presentation Type Mackerel**

| Presentation | Tonnes        |
|--------------|---------------|
| Whole Frozen | 17,354        |
| Frozen       | 5,400         |
| Other        | 1,145         |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>23,899</b> |

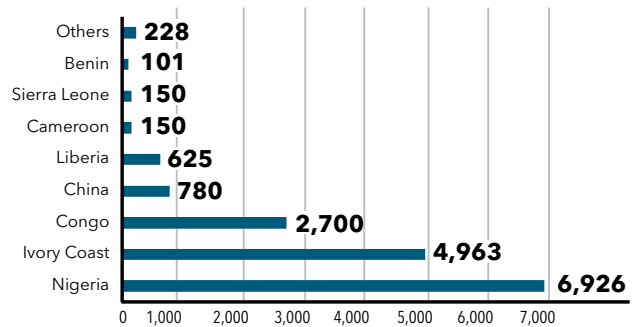
## Exports of Blue Whiting

Exports of Blue Whiting to third countries totalled 16,623 Tonnes in 2023 of which 41.7% went to Nigeria. All Blue Whiting was exported frozen.

**Table 10: Exports of Blue Whiting by Country and Weight**

| Country      | Tonnes        |
|--------------|---------------|
| Nigeria      | 6,926         |
| Ivory Coast  | 4,963         |
| Congo        | 2,700         |
| China        | 780           |
| Liberia      | 625           |
| Cameroon     | 150           |
| Sierra Leone | 150           |
| Benin        | 101           |
| Others       | 228           |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>16,623</b> |

**Figure 5: Blue Whiting Exports (tonnes)**



# Exports (continued)

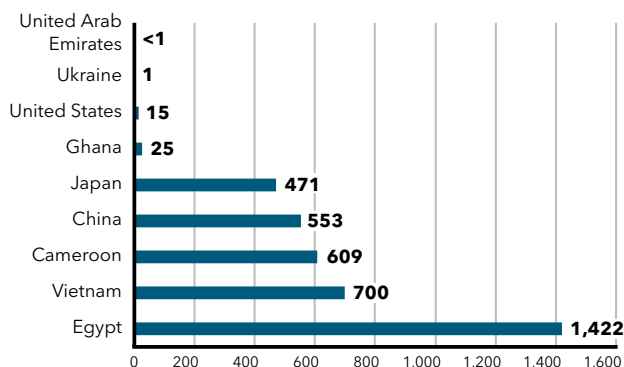
## Exports of Horse Mackerel

A total of 3,796 Tonnes of Horse Mackerel was exported to third countries in 2023 with 37.5% of this exported to Egypt. All Horse Mackerel was exported frozen.

**Table 11: Exports of Horse Mackerel by Country and Weight**

| Country              | Tonnes       |
|----------------------|--------------|
| Egypt                | 1,422        |
| Vietnam              | 700          |
| Cameroon             | 609          |
| China                | 553          |
| Japan                | 471          |
| Ghana                | 25           |
| United States        | 15           |
| Ukraine              | 1            |
| United Arab Emirates | <1           |
| <b>Total</b>         | <b>3,796</b> |

**Figure 6: Horse Mackerel Exports (tonnes)**



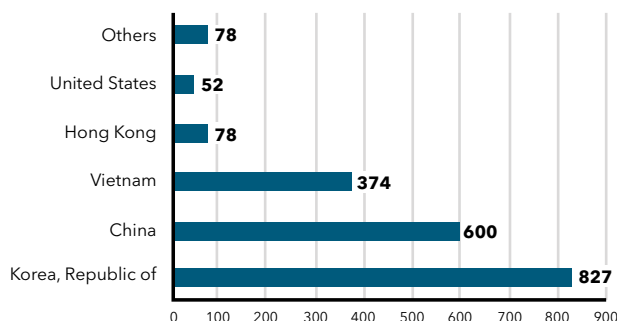
## Exports of Whelk

Whelk is regarded as a particular delicacy in some East Asian countries which is where most of this product was exported. In 2023, 41.2% of this Whelk was exported to Korea. Most consignments of Whelk were exported frozen.

**Table 12: Exports of Whelk by Country and Weight**

| Country            | Tonnes       |
|--------------------|--------------|
| Korea, Republic Of | 827          |
| China              | 600          |
| Vietnam            | 374          |
| Hong Kong          | 78           |
| United States      | 52           |
| Others             | 78           |
| <b>Total</b>       | <b>2,009</b> |

**Figure 7: Whelk Exports (tonnes)**



**Table 13: Whelk Presentation**

| Presentation | Tonnes       |
|--------------|--------------|
| Frozen       | 1,987        |
| Cooked       | 22           |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>2,009</b> |

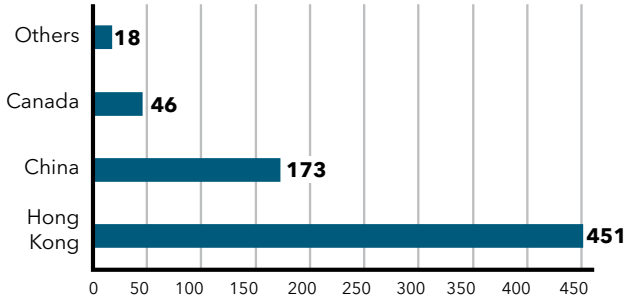
## Exports of Razor Clams

Most Razor Clams exported to third countries are flown out live within hours of landing; a small proportion (2.8%) was exported frozen. The Asian market and Canada are the primary destinations for this product.

**Table 14: Exports of Razor Clams by Country and Weight**

| Country      | Tonnes     |
|--------------|------------|
| Hong Kong    | 451        |
| China        | 173        |
| Canada       | 46         |
| Others       | 18         |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>688</b> |

**Figure 8: Razor Clams Exports**



**Table 15: Presentation Type Razor Clams**

| Presentation | Tonnes     |
|--------------|------------|
| Live         | 669        |
| Frozen       | 19         |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>688</b> |

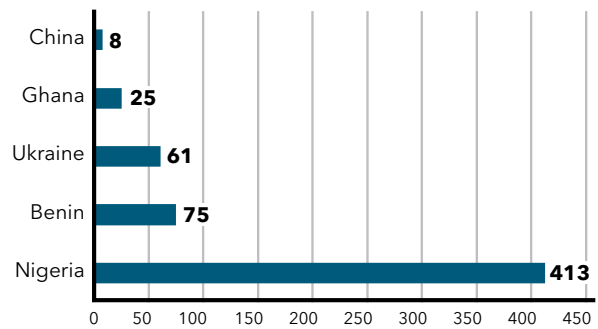
## Exports of Herring

A total of 582 Tonnes of Herring was exported to third countries in 2023. All Herring was exported frozen.

**Table 16: Exports of Herring by Country and Weight**

| Country      | Tonnes     |
|--------------|------------|
| Nigeria      | 413        |
| Benin        | 75         |
| Ukraine      | 61         |
| Ghana        | 25         |
| China        | 8          |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>582</b> |

**Figure 9: Herring Exports**



# Exports (continued)



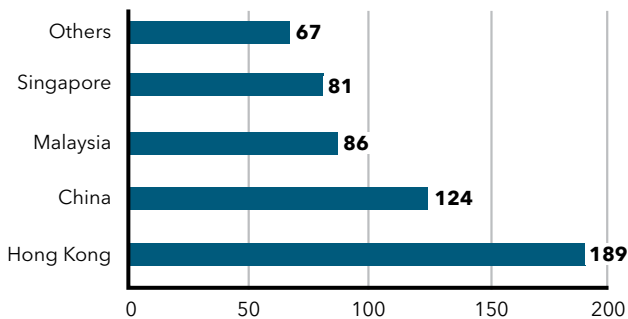
## Exports of Pacific Oysters

A total of 547 Tonnes of Pacific Oysters were certified for export by the SFPA in 2023. Cultivated Irish Oysters were exported live to countries primarily in the Far East as set out in the table below.

**Table 17: Exports of Pacific Oysters by Country and Weight**

| Country      | Tonnes     |
|--------------|------------|
| Hong Kong    | 189        |
| China        | 124        |
| Malaysia     | 86         |
| Singapore    | 81         |
| Others       | 67         |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>547</b> |

**Figure 10: Pacific Oysters Exports**



**Table 18: Presentation Type Pacific Oysters**

| Presentation | Tonnes     |
|--------------|------------|
| Live         | 546        |
| Frozen       | 1          |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>547</b> |

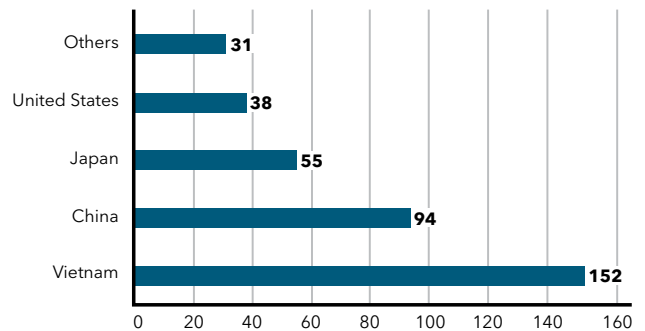
## Exports of Crab

A total of 370 Tonnes of Crab was exported in 2023; the majority of this was exported to countries in the Asian market. 82.4% of the exports were of frozen Crab while the remainder was exported as live produce.

**Table 19: Exports of Crab by Country and Weight**

| Country       | Tonnes     |
|---------------|------------|
| Vietnam       | 152        |
| China         | 94         |
| Japan         | 55         |
| United States | 38         |
| Others        | 31         |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>370</b> |

**Figure 11: Crab Exports**



**Table 20: Presentation Type Crab**

| Presentation | Tonnes     |
|--------------|------------|
| Frozen       | 305        |
| Live         | 65         |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>370</b> |

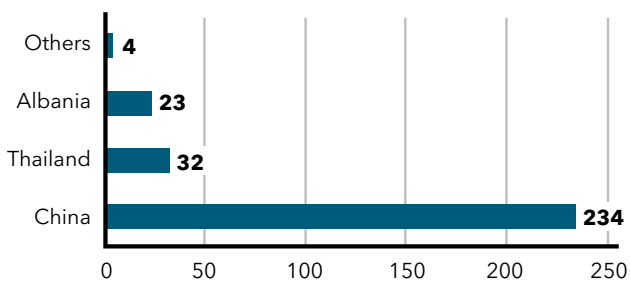
## Exports of Prawns

A total of 293 Tonnes of Prawns were exported to third countries in 2023. All Prawns were exported frozen.

**Table 21: Exports of Prawns by Country and Weight**

| Country      | Tonnes     |
|--------------|------------|
| China        | 234        |
| Thailand     | 32         |
| Albania      | 23         |
| Others       | 4          |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>293</b> |

**Figure 12: Prawns Exports**



547 tonnes

of Pacific Oysters were certified for export by the SFPA in 2023.

370 tonnes

of Crab was exported in 2023; the majority of this was exported to countries in the Asian market.

293 tonnes

of Prawns were exported to third countries in 2023.





AN t-ÚDARÁS UM  
CHOSAINT  
IASCAIGH MHARA

SEA-FISHERIES  
PROTECTION  
AUTHORITY

An t-Údarás um Chosaint Iascaigh Mhara,  
Lárionad Bia Mara Náisiúnta,  
Príomhoifig, An Cloichín,  
Cloich na Coillte, Co. Chorcaí,  
P85TX47

Head Office,  
National Seafood Centre,  
Park Road, Clogheen,  
Clonakilty, Co. Cork,  
P85TX47

**T** +353 23 8859300  
**E** [sfpa\\_info@sfpa.ie](mailto:sfpa_info@sfpa.ie)

**[sfpa.ie](http://sfpa.ie)**