CATCH-UP
Spring 2023

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

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Record breaking UK sea temperatures in 2022

Source *(full article)*: fishfocus.co.uk

Data published by the Centre for the Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (CEFAS) shows that sea temperatures across the south and east of England hit record-breaking levels in 2022.

The data provided by WaveNet shows that in August and early September 2022, sites in Tyne/Tees (off the Yorkshire coast), Dowsing (off the Lincolnshire coast), Southwold, Gabbard (in the southern North sea), South Knock (Thames estuary) and Hastings (in the English Channel) and around to Poole Bay in the Western Channel reached new highs. In the southern North Sea, temperatures were above 20 degrees for several weeks and reached 21 degrees at South Knock beating the last twenty years of data previously collected.

UK fishing fund gears up to help industry go green

Source *(full article)*: fishfocus.co.uk

Grants of up to £40,000 on offer through £100m UK Seafood Fund to trial greener engine technology, helping to create a safe and sustainable fishing sector whilst tackling rising fuel costs

The UK fishing industry is to benefit from an initial £2 million investment to trial new, greener engines and help create a safer, more sustainable fishing fleet as the latest round of the £100m UK Seafood Fund opens today (27 January 2022).

BUYER RECOMMENDS...

Good picks this season include:

- Monkfish
- Gilthead Bream
- Farmed Turbot
- Skrei Cod (until end of April)
- Frozen Pollock (until end of March)

SOCIAL CATCH-UP...

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Deal to curb harmful fishing devices a 'huge win' for yellowfin tuna stocks

Source *(full article)*: theguardian.com

Agreement to restrict use of aggregating apparatus in the Indian Ocean is hailed as a 'giant step forward' for species conservation

Coastal nations and conservation groups have described an agreement to restrict fishing vessels from using devices that contribute to overfishing as a "huge win" for tuna populations and marine life.

FISH MARKET REPORT Spring 2023

OVERVIEW

Welcome to the spring 2023 newsletter, which aims to cover the March to May period for the supply of fresh and frozen fish and seafood.

The spring season is warmly welcomed by most of us. As the evenings become lighter and the temperature warms up, we look forward to enjoying some time outside after work and sitting in pub gardens. Spring is not, however, the best time for many fish species. It is extraordinarily difficult to confidently recommend any species for use throughout the next three months as we see significant changes in quality due to spawning patterns during the season. The waters will start to warm and this can have an adverse effect on a number of species. Additionally the Easter holidays see demand, and therefore prices, increasing on some of the key lines. That being said, the difficult economic climate we are all facing is expected to supress demand to some degree. We are hopeful that this will see prices stabilise or reduce in coming months. We must, however, remain cautious, as there remains a level of volatility throughout the supply chain. This can create issues at any time.

Spring is, of course, a time of year that is liberally strewn with bank holidays and special occasions. These start on the 17th of March with St Patrick's Day – a Friday this year – followed by Mother's Day 2 days later on Sunday the 19th. Easter weekend is next with Good Friday on the 7th of April, Easter Sunday on the 9th, and the bank holiday Monday on the 10th. Then, in addition to our usual two bank holidays in May, you may be aware that we have an extra bank holiday for the Coronation of His Majesty King Charles III. This bank holiday will fall on Monday the 8th of May, following the Coronation on Saturday the 6th of May. Please speak to your account manager if you have any special requirements for this event, or indeed any other special events in the next three months. We are always happy to offer suggestions and guidance for any menus you may wish to run to commemorate these occasions.

Our Fresh Food Trends Report 2023 is available now. This has been compiled in conjunction with our sister meat and produce businesses using sales data and insights from our teams around the UK. The report spotlights ways in which the sector is using high quality produce to raise its menu game and persuade cash-strapped consumers to dine out, whilst setting out to demonstrate the many ways in which hospitality is responding to the challenges of the current trading environment, as well as how to stay ahead of the curve. Featuring insights into the best sellers and rising star products within the fresh ingredients world, the report includes the latest product growth predictions across seafood, the changing demand and current costs and opportunities surrounding meat, and what's selling well and when in the world of fresh fruit and vegetables. It also advises on key menu trends for 2023, supported by dish inspiration. Please click on this link https://www.directseafoods.co.uk/uncategorised/new-fresh-food-trends-report-2023-out-now to sign up to our mailing list and receive a copy into your mailbox.

With changing tides and spawning seasons to consider as we approach the next few months, please keep in regular contact with your account managers for day to day updates on what's in and what's good for those specials boards and for your general menu planning. As a general overview, UK mussels will start to deteriorate from April onwards. Make use of them in March, which tends to be the last month when we can guarantee consistent quality. Spawning for many white fish species falls in early spring, which means we are likely to see a deterioration in condition. Line caught fish will fetch premium prices during this time. Being flexible with your menus will ensure you use the right white fish at the right time. Native lobsters will start to show in late spring whilst the new season for Canadian lobsters commences at the end of March. UK flat fish should also start to fatten up to offer more favourable yields in late April and May – particularly plaice which will make a long awaited return to form.

Natalie Hudd, Director of Sales

FARMED FISH

Species	Comments
Sea Bass & Gilthead Bream	All producers in the Mediterranean (Spanish, Greek and Turkish) are looking to increase prices right now. The farmers are seeing a never-ending spiral of uncontrollable raw material prices, production costs, and transportation costs. Farms are reporting losing money in recent months due to lower sale prices and higher overheads. They are communicating that their cost of production has increased by approximately 30% in the second half of 2022. Transportation cost (sales & distribution) has also increased by circa 40%. Additionally, the devaluation of the EUR against the USD has had a negative effect on cash inflow and profitability. Our exchange rate has also worsened. The culmination of the above has resulted in a predicted increase for both species. We are not expecting issues with supplies, but we are seeing some horrifying price estimates. Gilthead bream remains far better value than sea bass. A swap to bream would mitigate the increases on sea bass, so we recommend you consider utilising this species as an alternative given that it has the same sustainability credentials and consistent quality. Another option to maintain cost would be to serve a smaller fillet.
Salmon	Forward prices indicate inflation for March. Further increases look likely in the run up to Easter – consistent with historical trends. Industry data suggests that prices will not fall away significantly until June. Farmers have a tendency to cut back on harvest volumes this time of year when the water is cooler and the fish feed less. This creates shortages and pushes up prices as we go into the spring season. We suspect that there might be some resilience from buyers as a result of reducing demand due to the cost of living crisis. This might cause prices to fall a little, but we have to remain cautious. This is particularly in light of the horrendous increases we all experienced at this time last year. All objective industry intel also points to prices remaining high, although we do not think, at this stage, that they will reach last year's levels. As is the case in all sectors, salmon farmers have reported that everything from feed price inflation to labour costs have taken a toll. Additionally, the proposed Norwegian salmon tax is adding uncertainty and may further dampen supply growth.
Trout	Trout farms are still in a state of recovery from lockdown, which has been affecting the growing schedules of fish. As we reported in our winter catch up, the farm that supplies the majority of our small rainbow trout had to temporarily close to allow their biomass to recover and grow. This put pressure on supply, and prices soared as a result. ChalkStream® trout are also seeing shortages as higher volumes of fish were taken out before the end of December 2022 due to a combination of demand and the expectation of reduced demand in 2023. The reduction in demand has not materialised as customers have sought these fish as an alternative to salmon and sea reared trout – both of which have rocketed in price. We are expecting supplies to improve in March, but there could also be a price increase in April. Given that trout is the natural alternative to salmon, and salmon prices are equally volatile, we strongly advise that you liaise regularly with your account manager to take advice regarding the best choice.
Halibut	Farmed halibut biomass on 3-5kg fish has improved and this should see some price betterment in the short term. All other sizes remain stable and, following some availability issues in the second half of 2022, we do not forecast any issues with this species. It certainly is not a low cost fish, but with prices so high on wild turbot and brill currently, farmed halibut is a very useful alternative.
Other Farmed Species	Meagre are usually farmed by bass and bream producers. As such, they are affected by the same factors we have detailed relating to forthcoming increases on these lines (see above). A great product, but expect price inflation. Farmed turbot is a good option for the forthcoming period. With larger wild flat fish (brill and turbot) making exorbitant prices due to strong export demand, and smaller flat fish suffering from quality issues due to spawning seasons, the range of farmed turbot available offers a valuable alternative. With sizes ranging from 1-4kg, and biomass improving, these represent a good choice for the spring. Rated a 2 (recommended) by the Marine Conservation Society (MCS), they also possess strong sustainability credentials.

WILD FISH

Species	Comments
Flat Fish	Spring is a mixed season for flat fish with plaice remaining out of season for most of March, but quality expected to improve as we head into April. Prices remain very firm currently on plaice and we are not expecting much better value due to a large proportion of the Dutch fleet signing up for their government's buy-out ruling. Circa 40 of the 120 trawlers which fish for plaice and sole in the North Sea will be left, and that will have a knock-on impact for the rest of the industry. The development of offshore wind farms, the effects of Brexit, and high fuel prices have all been cited as having an impact. Dover soles & lemon soles prices are changing daily and currently increasing. Part of this can be attributed to the reduction in fishing effort from the Dutch fleet, but we are also still seeing a strong demand for export. Dover sole prices are unlikely to improve as we head into warmer months as fish become scarcer. Megrims (or "Cornish sole") will be spawning until May when we will start to see them at their best. We do encourage you to try them at this time as any utilisation of these lesser-known species eases the pressure on other more popular choices. Both wild brill and turbot are fetching extortionate prices at auction currently. One for the specials board if any pockets of fish are landed that are better value.
White Fish	Skrei cod is now in season. Skrei are a migratory cod that undertake a long and rigorous swim from the Arctic to the northern coast of Norway at this time of year. The fish are extremely lean when they enter the Norwegian fishing grounds to spawn. This gives them their unique texture and flavour. They are also reported to have the highest nutritional value of all cod. Skrei is in season until the end of April. Landings are expected to improve during March for large cod, large haddock and some other UK native white fish. However, there have been gales around Iceland and the North Sea in recent weeks. This has resulted in a significant reduction in imports as flights were cancelled and boats tied up. A combination of this and the Icelandic quota reduction has seen volumes of cod available being down by as much as 45% year-on-year. At the start of February, the average price for cod in the month was 48% higher than February 2022. Looking forward to March, we will begin to approach the spawning cycles of some white fish species. The cheaper prices, which are then likely to be achieved, may well offset the higher prices during periods of adverse weather conditions. Coley, unlike cod and haddock, does not present the same spawning issues. However, as it is caught with other white fish, there may be less availability in southern ports. We advise waiting until April to list hake on your menus as spring can see hugely variable catches. Hake is caught using gill nets, but these cannot be used during periods of strong tidal flows, so most hake netters will stop fishing during spring tides.
Round Fish	Monkfish prices have eased back somewhat. A versatile and tasty fish, these will be a good choice for the spring. Bottom trawled fish from the south Celtic seas are rated a 2 (recommended) fish by the MCS, with gill or fixed net caught fish from the same area rated a 3. Monkfish were a cheap fish many decades ago when considered "poor man's lobster" and were routinely used as an economical substitute for scampi. Their surge in popularity has seen them firmly at the premium end of the fish offering in recent years, but they should be a stable choice for any menu in the spring. Try tempura battered monkfish cheeks as part of a fritto misto for a change. The mackerel run usually begins in late spring in the South West. In the far north, the season usually starts later (mid to late summer). It is best to wait until May to start adding to your menus when native fish will be available. There are imported fish around in the interim period, but the price will be higher. Sardines and herrings should be available mostly from the Devon and Cornish pelagic fisheries. April sees them peak in quality before they come inshore to spawn later in spring and summer. Both options are economically priced and make great additions to the specials board. Gurnards should be used with caution. These are a winter fish and will spawn from April to August so should be avoided at this time. They are also not considered sustainable by the MCS with yellow gurnards rated 5 (fish to avoid), and red and grey gurnards rated a 4 (significant improvements needed). Only otter trawled red gurnard attract a 3 rating.
Cephalopods	All UK squid, cuttlefish and octopus are rated 4 and 5 by the Marine Conservation Society. A 4 rating means that stocks need significant improvement and you should try to find alternatives if possible. A 5 rating means that there are significant environmental concerns with these stocks and no credible work is underway to make improvements. This means that the recommendation is to avoid it. We cannot recommend promoting any of these species due to these concerns. Talk to your account manager about frozen squid options as some of these species do not attract the same level of concern as the UK stocks. If you are going to use native squid, then hook and line caught from the Celtic sea (Cornwall) is rated a 4, which is only marginally better than all other 5 rated stock areas.
Exotics	Ramadan starts on the 22nd of March and lasts until mid-April. This might have a slight effect on supply for the end of the month as fishing effort reduces. However, good landings from Sri Lanka are expected which should compensate. Overall, we expect prices to be stable on tuna and swordfish lines. Our superfrozen yellowfin tuna is appropriate to be served in sushi, sashimi and any partially raw applications, and is caught by longline in the western and eastern central pacific. It is rated a 3 by the MCS, which is better than many other sources, so a good choice for the sustainability conscious. The Chilean swordfish season starts in May and runs until the end of October, so this should increase availability on this line whilst hopefully seeing a reduction in price.
Shellfish	Crab meat prices have recently increased. The main factors causing this are increased utility costs, lack of available volume for processing, strong demand from Europe and high staffing costs. The volume of crab landed in the UK continues to be lower than 3 years ago. Our supplier is working proactively with the likes of MSC, MCS, DEFRA and SAGB to try to develop a plan to increase the management of stocks through legislation. Crab is a fabulous choice for any menu, but the upward trend in price and lack of volume is worrying. Prices will not rise again during the spring, but they also will not come down. Try some of our new value added crab products to assist in reducing your own labour cost whilst enabling you to keep this product on the menu. These include Devon crab towers, Devon crab and wasabi terrines, Devon crab and smoked salmon parfaits, Devon crab arancini balls, and Devon crab gratin tarts. We also have different grades of crab meat, which can help to keep the price down if utilised well. Mussels will go out of season in May so take advantage from now until then. Any unseasonably warm weather before that time may accelerate the deterioration in quality of this much loved and sustainable species. The Canadian lobster season will peak from April to June. The new season will start, weather permitting, at the end of March. However, if the weather is exceptionally cold, ice may delay fishing. Exchange rates and lack of availability have kept prices high and we are hopeful of reductions once the season is underway. This will be aided by our own native lobster season starting in the late spring. Keep in touch with your account manager about availability. Native oysters will go out of season in May, but Pacific rock oysters will stay in season all year round. Oyster prices continue to rise in line with most other species, but we would expect them to be stable throughout the spring. Clam prices have risen of late. Supply is restricted because the MSC Poole Clam Season ended in December. It will start again in May. Native scallop meat prices have risen in price a little due to export demand. Quality is good however. Roeless scallops from the USA have also risen as we move to new stocks, which have been subject to the poor USD exchange rate. Watch out when sourcing roeless scallops for products that have had sodium tripolyphosphate added. These can be used to ensure the product takes on more water – artificially inflating the weight. They are not as cheap as they may seem, and they won't cook as well.

SMOKED, DELI & FROZEN FISH

Species	Comments
Smoked Fish	Any severe increase in the fresh salmon price has such far-reaching effects. Price rises on fresh salmon mean more expensive smoked salmon. We are anticipating a torrid time for salmon prices until June, so you can expect the same on the smoked range we carry. Our new Fresh Food Trends Report 2023 spotlights ways the sector is using high quality produce to raise its menu game and persuade cash-strapped consumers to dine out. The view is that doubling down on quality is way to counter the challenging economic climate. A dining experience that delivers that little bit extra is something to shout about. With this in mind, consider upscaling your smoked salmon offering by using different cures. Perhaps yuzu, ginger and coriander, or lemon, dill and black pepper. We carry an extensive range of the more unusual cures to help you create a point of difference in your menu. Smoked haddock should remain a reasonable option over the next three months. A portion of smoked haddock served on mustard mashed potato with a poached egg makes an appetising main. Why not use the trimmings for smoked haddock chowder or a fish pie? Smoked mackerel, following a recent rise, should remain stable over the spring. With a good shelf life, this is an omega 3 packed healthy option for a starter or salad with a horseradish dressing. Alternatively, serve as a pâté with cucumber and pickled beetroot.

SMOKED, DELI & FROZEN FISH

Species	Comments
Deli	Rising prices of raw material, services and transport have seen some marginal increases on a number of our deli lines. These include fish roe products such as avruga, keta, trout roe, flying fish roe, and lumpfish roe. The worst increases have been on crayfish in brine and prawns in brine as processors move to new stocks at higher prices. We do not, however, expect further significant increases over the next three months. We do carry a broad range of seaweeds, which have increased in popularity over recent years due to the variety of health benefits they deliver. Seaweed can be used to add a saltiness to a dish or used as a garnish. Rumoured to be a superfood trend for 2023.
Frozen Fish and Seafood	We are hopeful of some forthcoming reductions in our frozen fish range within the next three months. Frozen white fish prices are now stabilising. Depending on run rates on our current stock, we expect to be moving to cheaper product within the next three months. We are expecting some similar reductions on warmwater prawn lines. Value added lines (breaded and battered) remain the higher end of the scale with limited availability and higher ingredient costs. Look out for our frozen pollock promotion, which is on until the end of March. There are some great deals to be had on 170-200g, and 200-230g skinless fillets. Ideal for use as fish and chips, in fish pies, fish cakes, or as fish goujons.

Mystery of English crab and lobster die-offs deepens as experts find no clear cause

Source *(full article)*: theguardian.com

Report criticised after saying deaths unlikely to be down to algal blooms or pollutant and suggesting possibility of new disease

The mystery behind the deaths of thousands of crabs and lobsters along England's north-east coast has developed a further twist, with experts saying it could be down to a new disease.

The die-offs, which began in autumn 2021 and recurred at various points in 2022, affected at least 70km (43 miles) of the coastline, with some of the crustaceans showing an unusual twitching while dying.

Has the brexit fishing promise come true?

Source *(full article)*:bbc.co.uk

Even though fishing is a tiny part of the UK economy, it was a key issue in the Brexit campaign with promises to "take back control" of British waters.

At the end of 2020, Boris Johnson announced his new Brexit trade agreement with the EU, promising that "[we will] be able to catch and eat quite prodigious quantities of extra fish".

Scientists suggest eating oily fish linked to lower risk of kidney disease

Source *(full article)*: theguardian.com

Association found between higher levels of omega 3 fatty acids from seafood and reduced risk of kidney problems.

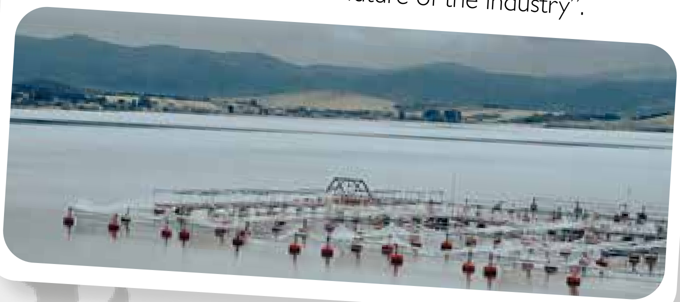
Eating at least two portions of oily fish such as mackerel, sardines or herrings a week is linked to a lower risk of chronic kidney disease and a slower decline in the organ's function, research suggests.

Aquaculture production is growing by an average of 13% per year?

Source *(full article)*:fishfocus.co.uk

The global fish catch is slowing down from year to year, while aquaculture production is growing annually by an average of 13%. In just ten years, aquaculture production has doubled

The trend of the global fishery is the stagnation of fish catch and the rapid growth of aquaculture production in fisheries, Andrey Golokhvastov, CEO of Agriconsult, said during the conference "FISH. Aquaculture: present and future of the industry".



Recipe Corner

Looking for some seasonal menu inspiration? Take a look at these delicious recipes, which utilise one of our buyers picks for winter.

Savoury bread and butter pudding
Source *(full article)*: fishfocus.co.uk

Spicy cod wraps with pineapple salsa
Source *(full article)*: fishfocus.co.uk

Honey baked trout with orange and soy
Source *(full article)*: fishfocus.co.uk

It's the season! Providing a delicate, fresh, clean taste, Skrei cod would be a delightful addition to your menus. Contact your account manager to find out more.

Please contact us with any seafood queries, and for information on daily landings, new products or assistance with menu planning. directseafoodslondon.co.uk