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# The European Union in the world trade in fishery products

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## Statistics in focus

### EXTERNAL TRADE

THEME 6 – 2/2003

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Although external trade in fishery products did not grow at the same pace in the EU as world-wide, it remains more sustained than for agricultural products. The European Union, which accounts for a relatively modest share of exports, emerges as a major importer and represents the second largest world outlet. It is primarily the five largest countries of the Union, together with Denmark, which account for this. In intra-Community trade, it is the countries of northern Europe which record the highest surpluses.

### Growth slower than for world trade

In 2001, world trade totalled about 6 400 billion euro, of which agricultural and fishery products accounted for 485 billion (or 7.6%). During the period 1995-2001, annual average growth for agricultural and fishery products did not attain the level recorded for total trade: 6% and 10% respectively. The primary sector's share of world trade has thus fallen, from 9.5% in 1995 to 7.6% in 2001. However, in the primary sector, the erosion of fishery products has been less marked, and their growth rate exceeds that of agricultural products. In 2001, fishery products account for 11.7% of primary product flows compared with 10.7% in 1995, with an annual average growth rate of 7.6% over the period in question (Table 1).

Table 1: Fishery products in world trade

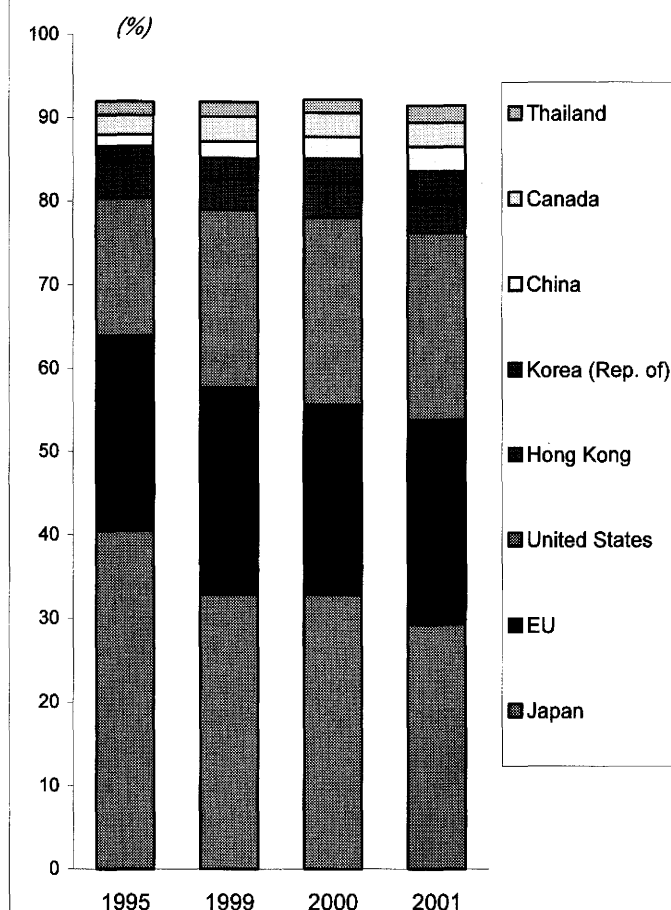
	1995	1997	2001	Annual average growth rate
World trade (billion euro)	3,612	4,612	6,383	10.0
<i>Of which: Agricultural and fishery products (%)</i>	<i>9.5</i>	<i>9.0</i>	<i>7.6</i>	<i>6.0</i>
Fishery products as % world trade	1.0	0.9	0.9	7.6
Fishery products as % of agricultural products	10.7	10.6	11.7	
% breakdown of fishery products				
<i>Fish and crustaceans (HS03)</i>	<i>81.3</i>	<i>80.2</i>	<i>80.9</i>	<i>7.5</i>
<i>Fats and oils of fish (HS 1504)</i>	<i>1.0</i>	<i>1.0</i>	<i>0.7</i>	<i>2.7</i>
<i>Prepared or preserved fish (HS 1604)</i>	<i>11.1</i>	<i>12.1</i>	<i>10.8</i>	<i>7.0</i>
<i>Prepared or preserved crustaceans (HS 1605)</i>	<i>6.3</i>	<i>6.5</i>	<i>7.5</i>	<i>10.7</i>

Source: Comext and Comtrade.

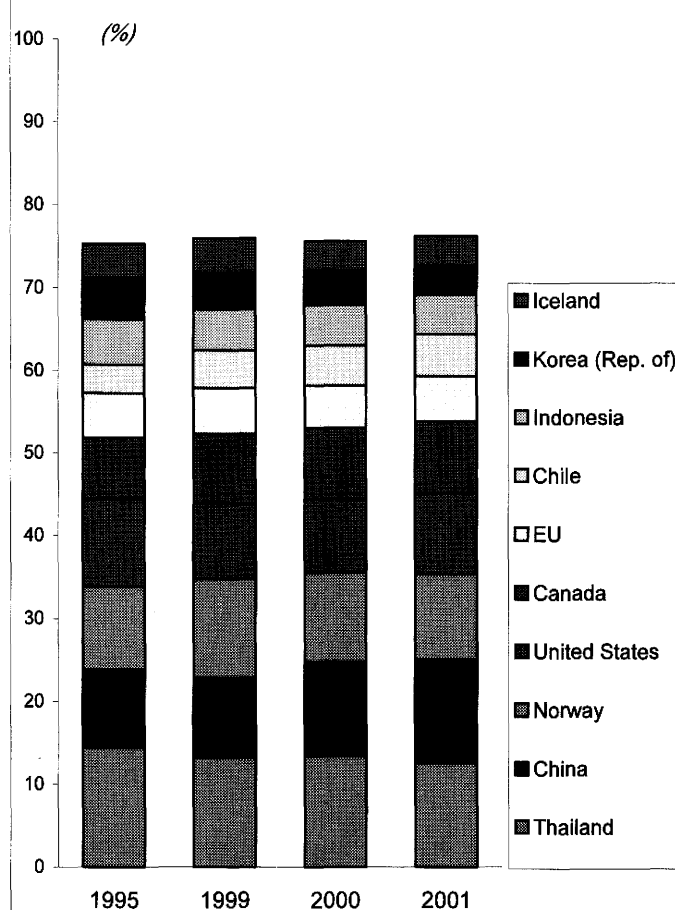




**Figure 1 : Fishery products, major world importers**



**Figure 2 : Fishery products, major world exporters**



### The EU second among world importers ...

In 2001, on the import side, the world market in fishery products was clearly dominated by Japan, the European Union and the United States, in descending order. These economic players accounted for more than three quarters of total world imports (Figure 1). In 2001, with about one quarter of world imports, the EU ranked second among world importers of fishery products. Since 1995, while the EU's share has remained relatively stable, at about 24% of total flows, trends in Japan and the United States have moved in diametrically opposite directions. Thus, Japan's share in world trade fell from 40.5% in 1995 to 29.3% in 2001, whereas that of the United States, over the same period, rose from 16.5% to 22.4%. Over the period in question, the domination by the EU, Japan and the United States fell slightly overall. Trailing far behind are Hong Kong, Korea, China, Canada and Thailand, which each account for between 2% and 4% of world imports of fishery products. With the exception of Hong Kong, these latter countries all record a slight increase in their share of world imports since 1995.

### ... but sixth among exporters

The concentration of flows is far less pronounced on the export side. The top three exporters accounted for just over one third (35.3%) of total world sales in 2001. Indeed, on the export side it requires the top ten exporters combined to arrive at an export share equivalent to the import share of the top three importers (76.2%).

The main world exporter over the period, Thailand, saw its influence decline, recording exports of 12.5% in 2001 compared with 14.4% in 1995.

The same trend was evident for the United States, which ranked second among exporters in 1995, accounting for 10.5% of export flows, while in 2001 it accounted for only 9.7%, falling to fourth place in the hierarchy of main exporters (Figure 2).

Norway remains in third place among the world's top exporters over the period in question.

China's position is quite different, and over the period it more than doubled its total exports and went from fourth place among world exporters in 1995 to second place from 2000. With a value of 4.5 billion euro in 2001, Chinese sales of fishery products equalled those of Thailand (12.5%).

Chile, and to a lesser extent Canada, also saw a rise in their relative share of fishery product exports: from 3.5% and 7.3% of flows respectively in 1995 to 5.1% and 8.7% respectively in 2001. In sixth place throughout the period, the EU retains its share of world exports of around 5.5%.

### Growing trade deficits for the EU and the United States

Unsurprisingly, given the performances outlined above, Japan, the EU and the United States, in that order, record the highest trade deficits in fishery products. In addition, while the negative balance of Japan expanded only slightly over the period in question, that of the EU widened substantially, by more than a half, while that of the United States multiplied by more than two and a half. At the opposite end of the scale, Thailand, Norway and China have the highest surpluses. They are followed, at about half those levels, by Chile, Indonesia and Canada.

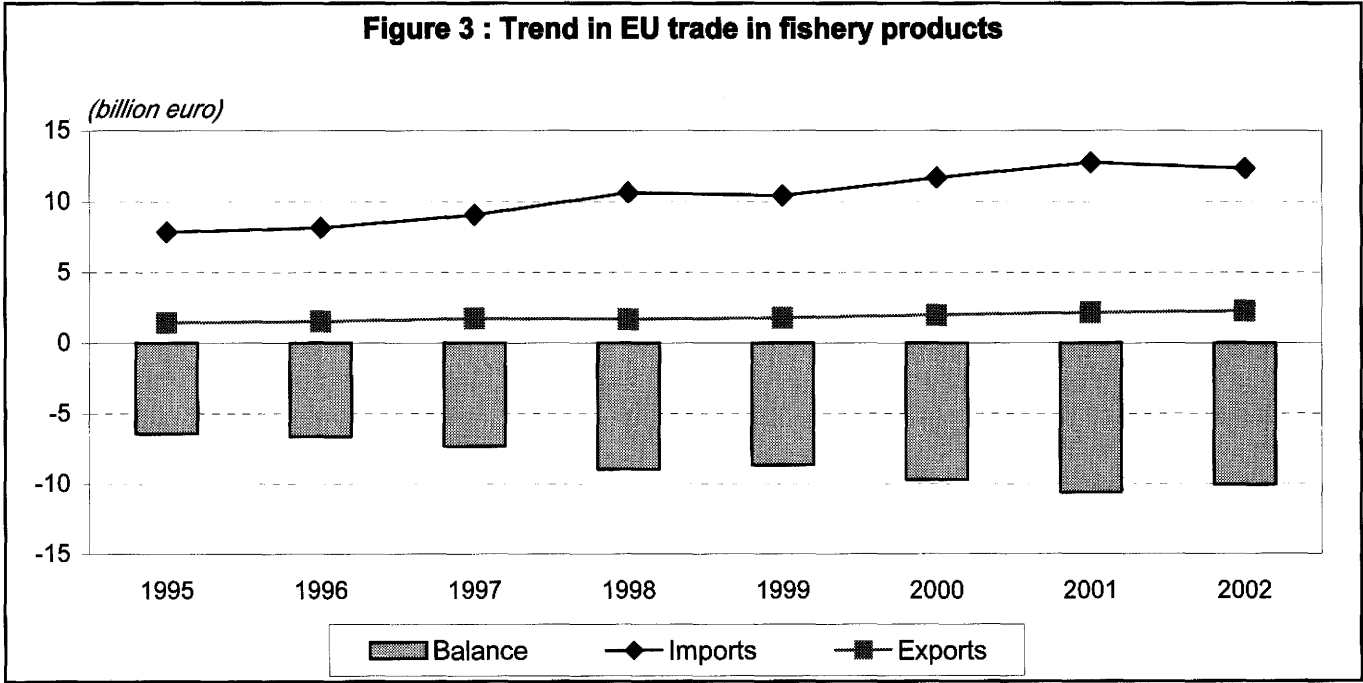
### Norway, the primary supplier of the EU

Totalling 12.3 billion euro in 2002, European imports of fishery products accounted for a little less than 1.5% of total Union imports (Figure 3).

Norway is by far the main supplier of this category of product to the EU. In 2002, it supplied 15.8% of European purchases: twice as much as Iceland (7.3%), the EU's second most important supplier. However, its share has dropped since 1995, when it accounted for 20% of incoming flows. This slide mainly benefited Argentina and China, whose share of European imports rose respectively from 2.9% and 1.9% in 1995 to 5% and 4.7% in 2001. The sharp trend reversal in 2002 was due to the interruption of shrimp imports from China owing to the high levels of antibiotics in shrimps farmed in that country.

The same reason, in combination with the end of the GSP (Generalised System of Preferences), explains the drop in imports of fishery products from Thailand in recent years, which in 1995 accounted for almost 6% of European imports, but have dropped since 1999, both in percentage and value terms, and accounted for only 2.8% in 2002 (Table 2).

Figure 3 : Trend in EU trade in fishery products



## Japan, the first customer of the EU

Exports from the EU amounted to 2.3 billion euro in 2002. Japan, the destination of almost a sixth of sales, was the EU's primary customer. After peaking in 1999, this country's share of exports has dropped.

The other main destinations of European exports are Switzerland, the United States, Russia and Nigeria which, together, were the destination of more than one quarter of sales in 2002.

China's changed ranking as an export destination of EU fishery products is also striking. EU sales to that country multiplied more than five-fold over the period, bringing it from 11th to 7th place among the most important trading partners for that flow in 2002 (Table 3).

## Increase in bilateral balances

The EU recorded a negative trade balance of 10 billion euro in 2002 in fishery products, coming second place in the world behind Japan. There has been a steady widening of the deficit throughout the period: 6.4 billion euro in 1995, 8.6 billion in 1999 and 10.6 billion in 2001 (Figure 3).

Overall, the country results observed over the years 1995 to 2002 confirm the trend. Thus, on the one hand the negative balances of the EU with Norway, Iceland or Morocco widened compared to 1995, as also those with Argentina, the United States, the Faeroe Islands and Russia. The fall in the deficit with Thailand is the exception. On the other hand, European surpluses with Japan, Switzerland, Nigeria and Egypt increased, particularly with the latter two countries (Table 4).

**Table 2 : EU's main trading partners for imports of fishery products**

Partner	1995	2000	2001	2002	Value 2002
	( <i>%</i> )				( <i>Million EUR</i> )
Norway	20.0	18.8	15.7	15.8	1,942
Iceland	8.2	7.4	7.3	7.3	905
United States	4.5	3.8	4.6	5.2	641
Morocco	3.8	4.6	4.6	5.1	635
Argentina	2.9	4.0	5.0	4.1	510
Russia	3.1	4.1	4.2	3.8	467
Faroe Islands	2.7	3.1	3.4	3.5	432
Thailand	5.9	3.4	3.0	2.8	345
Canada	2.9	3.0	2.8	2.5	309
India	2.7	2.1	2.2	2.4	299
China	1.9	3.7	4.7	2.4	297

Source : Comext.

**Table 3 : EU's main trading partners for exports of fishery products**

Partner	1995	2000	2001	2002	Value 2002
	( <i>%</i> )				( <i>Million EUR</i> )
Japan	18.3	20.6	17.8	16.0	364
Switzerland	11.0	8.6	8.9	8.6	197
United States	7.9	7.9	6.5	7.3	167
Russia	4.3	3.4	4.1	5.6	127
Nigeria	3.2	5.7	5.8	5.6	127
Norway	4.0	4.8	4.7	5.0	115
China	1.3	3.9	4.2	5.0	113
Poland	3.7	4.1	3.8	3.7	83
Ivory Coast	4.2	2.4	3.0	3.4	77
Egypt	1.7	3.5	3.1	2.7	62

Source : Comext.

**Table 4 : EU trade balance in fishery products**  
(*Million EUR*)

Partner	1995	2000	2001	2002
<b>Main deficits</b>				
Norway	-1,516	-2,101	-1,899	-1,827
Iceland	-643	-865	-933	-902
Morocco	-291	-501	-536	-578
Argentina	-220	-458	-635	-509
United States	-236	-282	-449	-474
Faroe Islands	-208	-361	-438	-431
Russia	-179	-406	-451	-340
Thailand	-427	-374	-333	-319
<b>Main surpluses</b>				
Japan	252	392	365	347
Switzerland	157	170	191	196
Nigeria	11	48	65	72
Egypt	21	69	67	62
Hong Kong	23	66	59	54

Source : Comext.

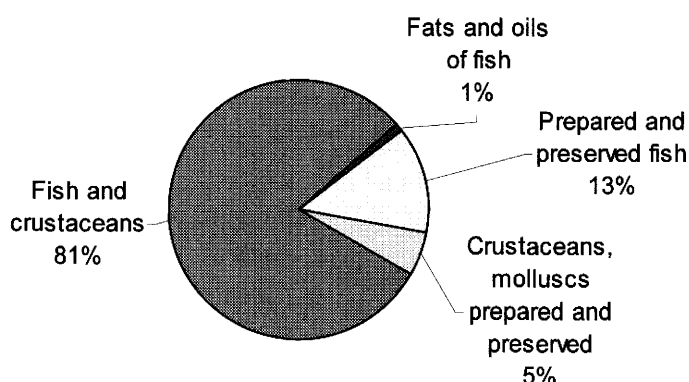
## Preponderance of flows of non-processed products

Following the pattern of world trade in fishery products, the EU trade primarily comprised fish, crustaceans and molluscs, i.e. unprocessed fishery products. In 2002, both on the export and import side, these latter accounted for around 82% of European trade, or a proportion equivalent to that recorded in world trade (80.9%). Furthermore, this share in the EU fishery products trade grew throughout the period, accounting for just over three quarters of flows in 1995.

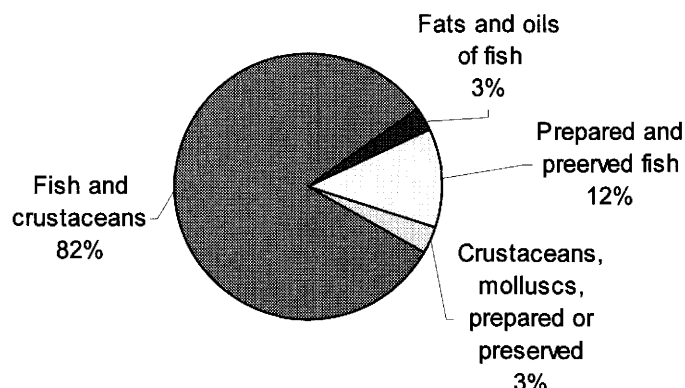
Prepared and preserved fish was the second largest group among the fishery products traded by the EU, but has declined in importance over the period in question, since it accounted for 13% of imports and 12% of exports in 2002 (Figures 4 and 5), against 13% and 15% respectively in 1995.

Non-processed products were the main cause of the EU negative balance in fishery products (Figure 6).

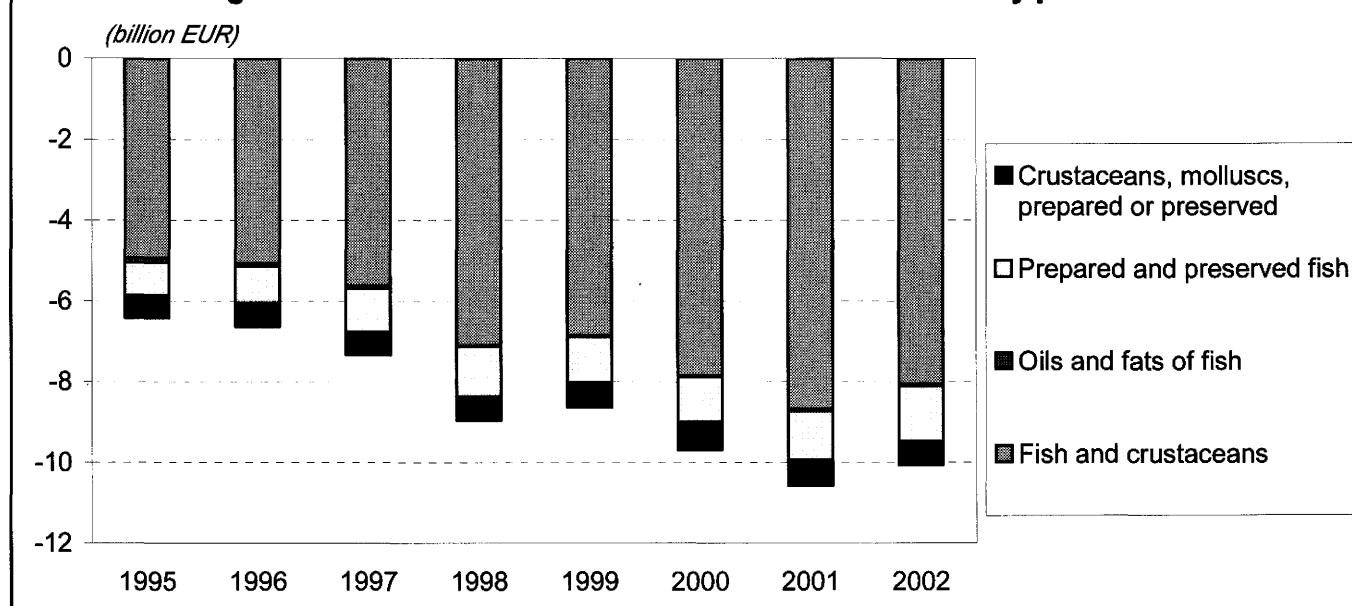
**Figure 4 : Breakdown of EU imports of fishery products, 2002**



**Figure 5 : Breakdown of EU exports of fishery products 2002**



**Figure 6 : Breakdown and trend in the EU balance in fishery products**



**Table 5 : Extra-EU flows and balances in fishery products by EU Member State**

Reporting Member State	1995	2001	2002	1995	2001	2002	1995	2001	2002
	Imports (%)			Exports (%)			Balance (Million EUR)		
Spain	17.4	21.3	20.0	20.9	27.6	24.1	-1,064	-2,114	-1,913
United Kingdom	13.9	14.2	14.3	8.9	9.1	9.1	-967	-1,614	-1,555
Denmark	13.3	12.5	12.5	15.7	14.2	16.4	-818	-1,282	-1,166
Germany	13.5	10.5	10.2	6.8	5.5	5.7	-960	-1,222	-1,133
Italy	8.4	9.0	9.8	3.9	4.1	4.7	-602	-1,060	-1,106
France	13.6	10.4	10.7	12.9	9.7	10.0	-887	-1,119	-1,094
Sweden	3.6	5.1	5.4	2.0	2.0	2.0	-258	-608	-623
Netherlands	6.3	7.0	7.2	17.2	18.6	18.3	-249	-487	-471
Belgium-Luxbg	3.8	3.9	3.9	1.1	0.6	0.8	-281	-478	-461
Portugal	4.3	4.0	3.4	3.4	2.3	2.0	-289	-465	-371
Greece	1.0	1.3	1.5	0.8	0.9	1.4	-70	-141	-158
Finland	0.6	0.7	0.6	1.1	0.6	0.5	-31	-70	-66
Austria	0.2	0.1	0.3	0.3	0.1	0.1	-13	-15	-30
Ireland	0.1	0.1	0.1	5.1	4.6	4.7	69	88	99
EU-15 (Million EUR)	7,865	12,749	12,326	1,446	2,161	2,279	-6,419	-10,588	-10,047

Countries sorted by size of balance in 2002. Source : Comext.

### The growing importance of Spain

The two main exporters of fishery products to third countries are Spain and the Netherlands, with 24.1% for the former and 18.3% for the latter in 2002. They are followed by Denmark (16.4%), while this trio is then trailed by France (10%), the United Kingdom (9.1%), Germany (5.7%) and Italy (4.7%). In addition, Spain's share has increased since 1995, while the share of Germany, France and Portugal has fallen (Table 5).

On the import side, with 20% of EU purchases in 2002, Spain still retains first place, followed by a group comprising the United Kingdom (14.3%), Denmark, (12.5%), France (10.7%) and Germany (10.2%). Whereas Spain and Italy have seen their share of imports of EU fishery products increase between 1995 and 2002, Germany and France have seen their share decline. With the exception of Ireland, all the Member States have a negative trade balance in fishery products.

**Table 6 : Intra-EU flows and balances in fishery products by EU Member State**

Reporting Member State	1995	2001	2002	1995	2001	2002	1995	2001	2002
	Imports (%)			Exports (%)			Balance Mill. EUR)		
Italy	19.1	18.2	17.8	3.4	3.2	3.1	-991	-1,560	-1,478
France	21.7	19.9	20.1	9.2	8.4	8.2	-788	-1,171	-1,156
Germany	12.4	12.8	11.4	7.4	8.3	7.9	-318	-431	-309
Portugal	4.2	5.3	5.7	2.8	2.5	2.5	-89	-290	-306
Austria	1.9	1.7	1.7	0.1	0.0	0.2	-111	-173	-157
Belgium-Luxbg	7.7	7.2	7.2	4.3	5.9	5.5	-215	-118	-142
Spain	15.3	15.5	15.2	10.2	13.8	13.2	-326	-124	-113
Finland	0.4	0.4	0.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	-24	-39	-52
Greece	1.3	1.3	1.5	2.0	2.0	1.9	45	83	60
Ireland	0.8	1.2	1.1	2.9	3.0	2.8	130	196	190
Sweden	2.0	1.6	1.8	2.6	4.4	4.7	37	311	330
United Kingdom	4.7	5.3	5.5	11.7	9.2	9.2	431	444	441
Netherlands	5.9	6.8	7.9	14.5	16.3	18.3	531	1,057	1,192
Denmark	2.5	2.8	2.8	28.8	22.9	22.5	1,629	2,186	2,161
EU-15 (Million EUR)	6,271	10,451	10,210	6,211	10,822	10,870	-60	370	661

Countries sorted by size of balance in 2002: Source: Comext.

## Intra-EU: privileged position for certain Member States

To some extent, Member States' intra-Community trade in fishery products reflects their performance on the world market. Thus, Denmark, the Netherlands and Spain remain the top three exporters in intra-EU trade (Table 6), but in inverse order compared to their extra-EU trade. In the same way, the presence of Finland and Austria in intra-EU trade is very minor - as it is on world markets.

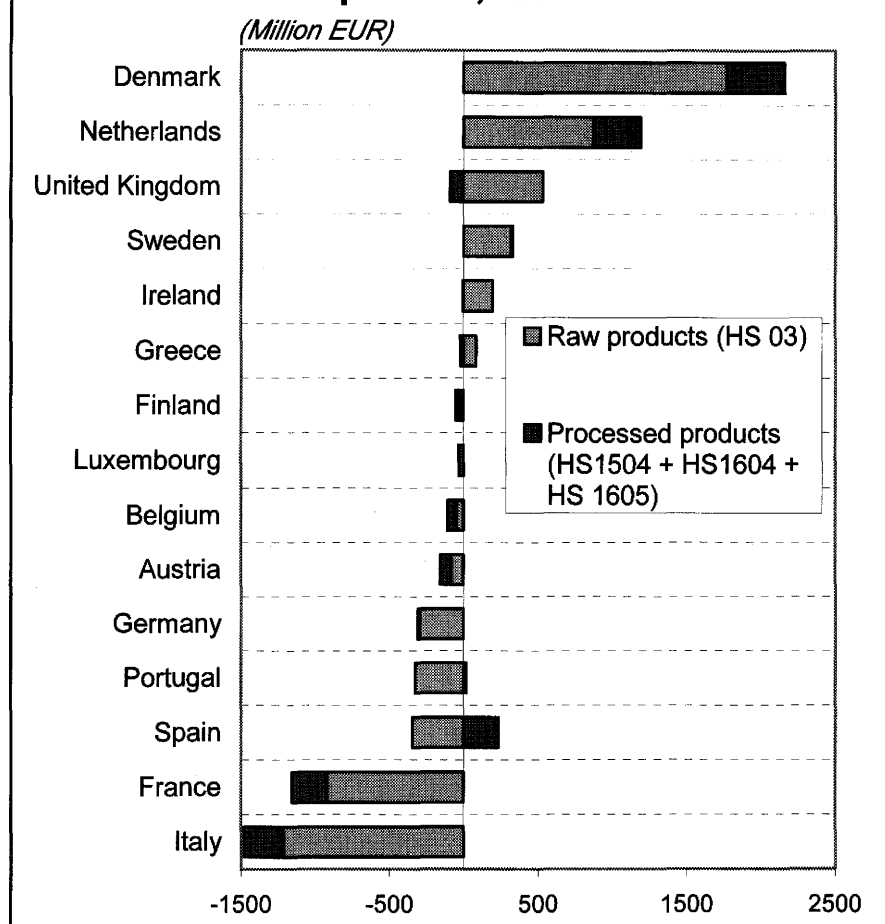
However, on the import side, while Spain remains the major player, France and Italy are increasingly visible. These latter countries, relatively modest importers vis-à-vis the rest of the world, are the primary importers in intra-Community trade (20.1% and 17.8% respectively in 2002). In contrast, the United Kingdom, with high imports from outside the EU, participates only on a small scale in intra-EU trade in fishery products (5.5% of intra-EU imports in 2002).

In view of the above results which, as already explained, sometimes diverge from those observed in world trade, it is not surprising that Italy and France emerge as the lar-

gest net importers within the Union. Denmark, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom record the highest surpluses in intra-EU trade in fishery products (Figure 7), while Denmark and the United Kingdom record some of the highest deficits in extra-

EU trade in these products.

**Figure 7: Intra-EU balance in fishery products, 2002**



## ESSENTIAL INFORMATION – METHODOLOGICAL NOTES

**Statistical sources:** the data on international trends are taken from the UN Comtrade database, apart from data on the trade of EU Member States which are taken from the Eurostat Comext database. The EU statistics are compiled on the basis of harmonised concepts and may differ from the data published at national level by the Member States.

**Classification of products:** the title "Fishery products" encompasses on the one hand Chapter 03 of the Harmonised System: Fish and crustaceans, molluscs and other aquatic invertebrates, and, on the other, the following sub-chapters:  
1504 : Fats and oils and their fractions, of fish or marine mammals;

1604 : Prepared or preserved fish; caviar and caviar substitutes prepared from fish eggs;  
1605 : Crustaceans, molluscs and other aquatic invertebrates, prepared or preserved.



Further information:

Reference publications

Title	External and Intra-European Union Trade - Monthly Statistics			Comext, Domain: Comtrade and EEC Special	
Catalogue No	KS-AR-03-XXX-EN-C	Price	EUR 20	Trade	

Databases

To obtain information or to order publications, databases and special sets of data, please contact the **Data Shop** network:

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For information on methodology

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