



## INDUSTRY CAPABILITY REPORT



## SRI LANKAN FISHERIES SECTOR

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Sri Lankan fisheries sector is a vital component of the nation's economy, recognized for its significant contribution to food security, employment, rural development, and foreign exchange earnings. With its rich marine biodiversity and strategic location in the Indian Ocean, Sri Lanka has developed a robust fisheries industry that plays a crucial role in global markets.

The Sri Lankan fisheries sector, including marine and freshwater fishery industries, encompasses three main sub-sectors: offshore and deep-sea fisheries, coastal fisheries, and inland fisheries and aquaculture. In 2023, the marine fish production was 308,430 Mt and the total Inland and Aquaculture Fish Production was 102,330 MT, and the total fish production was 410,760 MT. **(Source: Annual Performance Report, DOFR, 2024).**

Sri Lankan Seafood and aquaculture industry is with its own culture and provides livelihood to a massive population in all over the country. It is a well-established sector and plays an important role generating considerable annual income. The main product categories are Tuna, Swordfish, Prawns and Shrimps, Mud and blue swimming crabs, lobsters, Sea cucumber, Baramundi fish and other species.

Sri Lanka's export fisheries sector is characterized by its diversity, encompassing a wide range of products including fresh, frozen, and processed seafood. The sector benefits from a well-established infrastructure that supports efficient harvesting, processing, and distribution, alongside a commitment to sustainable fishing practices. This commitment is reflected in the sector's adherence to international standards and certifications, which enhance its competitiveness on the global stage. The export of fish has made a special contribution to the growth of the national economy and foreign reserves. The export volume of edible fish products in 2024 reached 22,595 metric tons, amounting to USD 284,253,238 in value, including processed products.

## 2. AQUACULTURE

According to FAO, most of the fish production depends on the wild catch and few but considerable amount comes from Aquaculture. Currently it is developing as a blooming sector and concentration into one of the main drivers of the industry which includes shrimp and sea cucumber farming.

Sri Lankan government agencies are also seeking to position the country's inland fishing industries as major export earning sectors by establishing aquaculture and looking for new

investments and offering from private and public sector to provide interest free loans and support them to scale up their businesses.

In line with the world market demand for pacific white shrimp (*L. vannamei*), high-yield prawn variety, which was introduced to Sri Lanka in 2018.

### 3. EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES AND CONTRIBUTION TO ECONOMY

The seafood and aquaculture sector in Sri Lanka offers a wide array of employment opportunities, significantly contributing to the livelihoods of many individuals, especially in coastal and rural communities. The fisheries sector plays a key role in the island nation's economy and provides livelihoods for more than 2.7 million people (DoFR, 2024). This sector not only supports direct employment but also creates numerous indirect job opportunities through related industries and services, including Fishing and Harvesting, Aquaculture Farming, Processing and Packaging, Logistics and Distribution, Research and Development, and Support Services. Growth in Economic Activities in fisheries sector is 1.9% (Central Bank, 2024).

### 4. KEY PRODUCTS AND VARIETIES

HS No.	Definition	Main Products
0303	Fish frozen	Tuna, Sword fish, Marlin
030613, 030623	Crustaceans	Fresh, chilled and frozen prawns
0302	Fish, fresh, chilled	Tuna, Sword fish, Marlin
0307	Fisheries	Beche-de-mer, Cuttle Fish, Molluscs
030614, 030624	Crustaceans	Fresh, live, chilled and frozen crabs
030612, 030621	Crustaceans	Fresh, live chilled and frozen lobsters
0305	Preserved fish	Maldivian fish, sprats, shark fins, fish maws
1603	Preserved fish	Fish or of crustaceans, molluscs or other aquatic invertebrates
1605	Extracts	Fish or of crustaceans, molluscs or other aquatic invertebrates

## 5. EXPORT PERFORMANCE

**Table 01: Fish Exports for years 2022-2024**

Description	2022		2023		2024	
	Quantity (Kg)	Value (USD)	Quantity (Kg)	Value (USD)	Quantity (Kg)	Value (USD)
Edible Fish Products	25,180,511	269,011,840	23,784,502	262,240,447	20,281,646	232,971,768
Ornamental Fish	463,477	21,737,725	533,219	26,381,866	516,128	24,464,063
Live Fish	1,401	20,711	279	8,213	261	473
<b>Total:</b>		<b>290,770,276</b>		<b>288,630,526</b>		<b>257,436,304</b>

Source: Sri Lanka Customs

### Top 10 Destinations

Description		2024
		Value (USD)
<b>Edible Fish Products</b>		<b>232,971,768</b>
1	United States	27,450,194
2	Germany	25,601,022
3	United Kingdom	21,475,843
4	France	21,032,571
5	Italy	19,427,307
6	Netherlands	17,373,244
7	Hong Kong	15,176,188
8	China	11,519,857
9	Canada	10,424,895
10	Japan	9,569,905
	Other Markets	53,920,742
<b>Ornamental Fish</b>		<b>24,464,063</b>
1	United States	10,043,784
2	China	1,741,960
3	Australia	1,714,143
4	United Kingdom	1,516,706
5	Germany	1,113,419
6	Saudi Arabia	791,195
7	Canada	708,880
8	United Arab Emirates	592,792
9	Korea South (Korea, Republic of)	499,800
10	Poland	460,733
	Other Markets	5,280,651
<b>Live Fish</b>		<b>473</b>
1	Japan	267
2	Canada	108
3	Qatar	87
4	Israel	10
	<b>Total :</b>	<b>257,436,304</b>

Source: Sri Lanka Customs

## 6. ORNAMENTAL FISH PRODUCTION AND CONTRIBUTION TO ECONOMY

Sri Lanka is positioned among the first 60 Seafood and Aquaculture fish supplying countries in the world & currently covers more than 60 markets.

**Exported value in USD Thousand**

Exporters	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Norway	10,713,138	13,406,861	15,142,078	15,484,562	15,470,016
China	13,589,111	15,270,507	16,650,496	14,385,586	14,144,541
Chile	5,250,093	6,140,583	7,780,703	7,662,915	7,658,855
Viet Nam	7,522,353	8,085,270	9,974,401	8,002,057	7,459,123
Ecuador	4,186,641	5,773,738	8,535,858	7,568,180	7,396,267
India	5,693,091	7,385,297	7,556,476	6,935,313	6,782,987
Canada	4,662,567	6,881,129	6,235,852	5,430,918	5,720,428

**Source: ITC Trade Map**





## **7. KEY PLAYERS**

- John Sea Foods Pvt Ltd
- Taprobane Seafoods Pvt Ltd
- Ceylon Fresh Seafood Pvt Ltd
- H & M Western Pvt Ltd
- Lihini Sea Foods Pvt Ltd
- Annai And Sons Pvt Ltd
- Blue Line Ocean Pvt Ltd
- Jay Sea Foods Processing Pvt Ltd
- Global Sea Foods Pvt Ltd
- Ceylon Catch Pvt Ltd

## **8. GOVERNMENT POLICY AND SUPPORT AVAILABLE IN THE SECTOR**

Rules and regulations governing the fisheries and aquaculture sectors in Sri Lanka have been formulated and are enforced by the Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources and the National Aquaculture Development Authority of Sri Lanka. These regulations are periodically amended to align with the evolving needs of the country and the sector.

### **Year - 2019**

#### Regulations

1. Minimum standards for the citizens of Sri Lanka engaged in fishing operations in foreign flagged fishing boats Regulations (Amendment) Gazette extraordinary No. 2107/50 and dated 2019.01.25
2. The Fishing Operations Regulations of 1996 (Amendment) Gazette extraordinary No. 2115/8 and dated 2019.03.18
3. Issuance of Certificates of Competence for Skippers (local fishing boats) Regulations 2019 Gazette extraordinary No. 2126/6 and dated 2019.06.03

### **Year - 2020**

Imports and export (control) Act Gazette extraordinary No.2171/5 and dated 2020/04/16  
Some regulations have been formulated by National Aquaculture Development Authority of Sri Lanka.

### **Year 2021:**

1. **Marine Pollution Prevention Act (Amendment):** Regulations were introduced to further strengthen measures against marine pollution, especially concerning oil spills and waste management by fishing vessels.
2. **Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (Amendment) Act:** Aimed at improving the sustainability of marine resources, with new provisions for regulating fishing practices and protecting endangered species.

### **Year 2022:**

1. **Fisheries Management Regulations:** These regulations introduced enhanced monitoring and control mechanisms for fishing operations, especially in the context of combating illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing activities.
2. **Amendments to the Aquaculture Development Regulations:** Focused on promoting sustainable aquaculture practices while ensuring that environmental impacts are minimized. New guidelines for the establishment and operation of aquaculture farms were enforced.

### **Year 2023:**

1. **Import and Export Control Regulations (Amendment):** Updated to include stricter controls on the import and export of certain fish species, especially those listed under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES).
2. **New Regulations for Fishing Vessel Registration:** These regulations require all fishing vessels to be registered and equipped with tracking devices to monitor their activities in Sri Lankan and international waters.

There are some organizations dedicated for the development of Fisheries industry in Sri Lanka as follows.

- National Aquatic Resources Research and Development Agency (NARA) for research and Development  
<http://www.nara.ac.lk/>
- National Aquaculture Development Authority (NAQDA) for development and management of all freshwater aquatic resources in the country. It also promotes development of aquaculture and sea farming.  
<http://www.naqda.gov.lk/>



- Ceylon Fisheries Cooperation (maintenance of cold storage facilities and production and sale of fishery by-products)  
<https://www.cfc.gov.lk/>
- Ceylon Fisheries Harbors' cooperation (delivering quality fishery (delivering quality fishery-harbour related services and providing the fishing community with modern infrastructure and facilities)  
<http://www.cfhc.gov.lk/>
- Department of Fisheries (Management, regulation, conservation and development of fisheries and aquatic resources)  
<https://www.fisheriesdept.gov.lk/>

## 9. INFRASTRUCTURE AVAILABLE FOR THE SECTOR

### Current Infrastructure Facilities

- **Major Fishery Harbours:** 25
- **Anchorage:** 18
- **Minor Fish Landing Centers:** 931
- **Ice Plants:** 106 (with an ice production capacity of 4,973 tons)
- **Boat Manufacturing Yards:** 67 (registered)
- **Fishing Gear Factories:** 15

*Sources: Department of Fisheries, 2022 ([Ministry of Fisheries](#))*

In addition to,

- Availability of 55 numbers EU approved processing plants Cold chain facilities
- Well-equipped harbor facilities
- Well-developed roads and highways to transport fish from harbor to processing plants and then to the airport (shorter supply chain) within a short period
- Used of e business facilities.

## 10. TOTAL EXPORTS OF PRODUCTS IN SELECTED CATEGORIES OF THE SECTOR

Sri Lanka plays an important role in international market, with a total share of 0.2% of the total market value. Main Seafood and Aquaculture product categories are Tuna, Sword fish, Shrimps, Baramundi, Sea Cucumber and crabs which have quality of unique taste and the texture. These products are exported in fresh, chilled, frozen form few in live form which are coming under HS code 0302, 0303, 0304, 0305, 0306, 0307, 0308 and some are exported in processed form under HS code 1603 and 1605.

### Exports (Value In US\$)

Code	2022		2023		2024	
	Quantity (Kg)	Value	Quantity (Kg)	Value	Quantity (Kg)	Value
H.0304	4,143,486	54,075,228	4,471,654	54,361,045	5,616,648	75,069,401
H.0302	2,953,210	46,145,246	3,472,607	50,522,333	3,753,803	49,857,919
H.0303	7,860,744	79,388,850	6,434,259	67,946,949	4,078,100	39,500,984
H.0306	7,321,817	59,539,646	5,428,630	47,606,477	3,940,425	36,234,943
H.1605	259,728	10,542,426	416,566	13,023,371	1,797,470	26,816,934
H.0301	464,878	21,758,436	533,498	26,390,079	516,389	24,464,536
H.0307	2,080,981	11,949,180	3,109,890	18,400,745	2,207,658	14,336,470
H.0308	414,437	11,394,028	394,762	15,014,500	220,977	9,731,840
H.0305	405,836	6,519,660	472,700	8,388,397	464,035	8,240,211
H.1603			4,275	2,816		
		<b>301,312,702</b>		<b>301,656,713</b>		<b>284,253,238</b>

Source: Sri Lanka Customs

## 11. POTENTIAL FOR EXPANSION IN THE SECTOR

- Sri Lanka has rich and diverse marine resources, including deep-sea and offshore species that are yet to be fully exploited, providing opportunities for increasing export volumes.
- There is significant potential to expand into value-added seafood products, such as ready-to-eat meals, smoked or marinated fish, and other processed seafood items, which can fetch higher prices in international markets by utilizing high-value species such as sea bass, scampi, mud crab, sea cucumber, and seaweed.
- By focusing on sustainable and eco-friendly fishing practices, Sri Lanka can capitalize on the growing global demand for certified sustainable and organic seafood products.

- Exploring emerging markets in Asia, the Middle East, and other regions offers the potential to diversify export destinations and reduce dependency on traditional markets like the EU and the USA.
- Expanding aquaculture, particularly in areas suitable for shrimp and other high-value species, can significantly boost production and exports. (L.Vannamei shrimp and crabs)
- Investing in modern fishing techniques, better preservation methods, and improved cold chain logistics can reduce post-harvest losses and enhance the quality of exports, leading to increased competitiveness in the global market.

## **12. STRENGTHS OF THE SECTOR**

- Year-round fishing and decentralized fish harbour facilities
- Economic Zone (EEZ) of 517,000 km<sup>2</sup>
- Sri Lanka has an extensive freshwater and brackish water resource to sustain viable fishing and can be used for Aquaculture
- Sri Lanka offers high-quality seafood, particularly tuna, which is in demand in international markets
- Adherence to CITES regulations to protect endangered fish species
- Adherence to the latest technology in product
- development, processing and packaging techniques ensuring the superior quality, taste and texture of export product. (55 EU approved processing plants in Sri Lanka)
- Proximity to key international shipping routes enhances the efficiency of exporting seafood products
- Initiatives and support from the Sri Lankan government & facilitate growth in the sector
- Sri Lankan seafood is recognized in major markets such as the EU, USA, and Japan.
- Emphasis on sustainable and responsible fishing practices has boosted the global reputation of Sri Lankan seafood (IUU, IOTC Friend of Sea)

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