



NEWS | 23.5.2024

Rising producer prices for Baltic herring and sprat drove the commercial marine fishery catch value to an increase in 2023

Fish and fishery

Business

The commercial marine fishery catch amounted to 90 million kilos in 2023, being three million kilos more than in the year before. The catch mainly consisted of Baltic herring caught offshore by means of trawling, the catch of which remained at the previous year's level. The catch value increased by as much as 33 per cent from 2022, driven by the high producer prices for Baltic herring and sprat. While the salmon and Baltic herring catch recorded by coastal fishers remained small last year, catches of vendace, perch and smelt, among other species, were larger than normal. In coastal areas, fishers mainly deployed gillnets and traps.

According to the statistics of the Natural Resources Institute Finland (Luke), last year's Baltic herring catch totalled 69 and the sprat catch 15 million kilos, both being more than a million kilos larger than in the previous year. The catch value increased to EUR 37.6 million, driven by higher producer prices. The most important species in financial terms was Baltic herring ahead of sprat, followed by perch, European whitefish, pikeperch, vendace and salmon.

A record-high vendace catch

A record-high vendace catch

A fifth of the Baltic herring catch and more than half of the sprat catch were landed in Estonia or Sweden. More than ten million kilos of fish were landed at the fishing ports of Uusikaupunki, Kasnäs in Kimitoön, Paldiski in Estonia, and Tuomarainen in Taivassalo. A fifth of the Baltic herring catch landed in Finland was used directly as food, more than a third was used to produce fishmeal for aquaculture, 11 per cent was used as feed for fur animals, and the remaining portion was exported. The majority of the sprat catch landed in Finland (80 per cent) was used in fishmeal production.

"Last year's vendace catch was record-high at more than half a million kilos. Practically

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Research program



the whole vendace catch was fished in the Bothnian Bay where it was the most important species measured by value,” says Senior Statistician **Pirkko Söderkultalahti**.

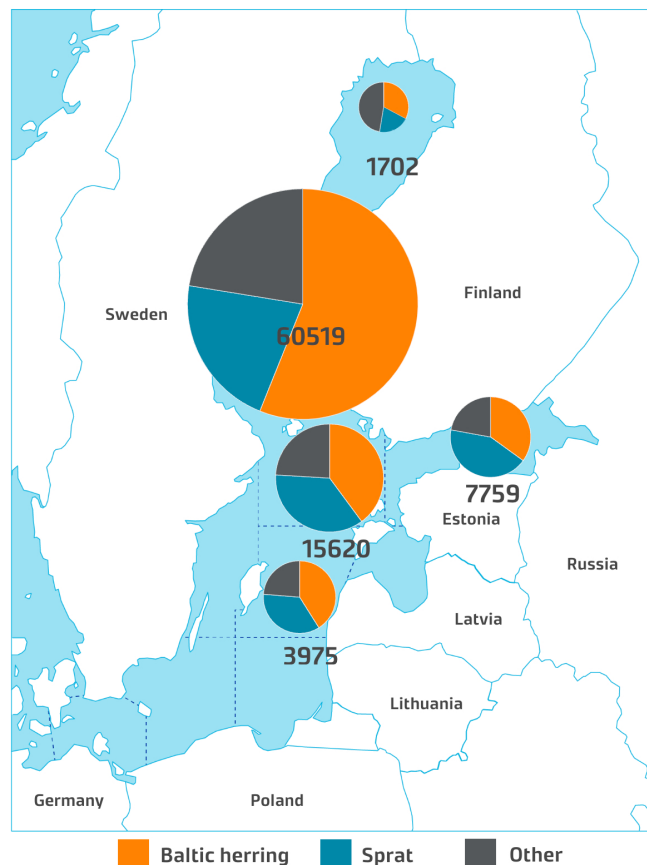
The sprat catch fished in the Bothnian Sea was larger than normal. In addition, the perch, bream and roach catches were larger than on average in the 2000s. The decrease of more than ten years in the pikeperch catch came to a stop, while the pike catch was at the average level. The European whitefish, burbot and trout catches were smaller than on average.

Total allowable catches and quotas foster sustainable fishing

To ensure sustainable fishing, catch quotas, as well as seasonal and regional restrictions, have been set for the most commercially important species. Of the quota set for the Gulf of Bothnia, roughly 72 per cent of Baltic herring quota was utilised last year, while the full quota was reached in the Gulf of Finland and the Baltic Proper. The sprat quota was also utilised in full. Slightly less than half of the salmon quota was reached, totalling 16,500 fish, and more than half, or 26,000 kilos, of the cod quota was utilised.

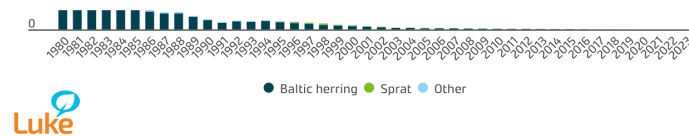
In addition to the quotas, the total catch was affected by the state of fish populations, fuel costs, demand for fish, disturbance caused by seals and cormorants, and the fishing effort. In the 2000s, the number of gear days, a product of number of fishing days and the quantity of gear, has nearly halved in trap fishing and trawling, and has decreased to a third in gillnet fishing and to an eighth in hook and line fishing.

Commercial marine fishery catch in 2023 (1000 kg)



Commercial marine fishery catch in 1980–2023

mill. kg



High producer prices for Baltic herring and sprat

“In 2023, EUR 0.30 per kilo was paid for Baltic herring and sprat landed in Finland, showing an increase of 30 per cent from 2022. As Baltic herring and sprat are the most important species in commercial marine fishery, their rising producer prices drove the whole value of the commercial marine fishery catch to a significant increase,” says Senior Statistician **Miikka Husa**.

High demand for fishmeal and fish oil, as well as the scarcity of raw materials in the markets, had an impact on the increase in prices. The smaller fishing quotas set for the Baltic Sea and the fishing bans imposed in South America due to El Niño were reflected in the global prices of raw materials for fishmeal and fish oil.

The producer price was EUR 0.43 per kilo for Baltic herring for human consumption and EUR 0.27 per kilo for industrial Baltic herring. The producer price for gutted salmon also continued to increase, being EUR 10.32 per kilo, up by 12 per cent from 2022. In contrast, the producer price for gutted European whitefish decreased by four per cent to EUR 5.54 per kilo.

The statistics on producer prices for fish were updated in conjunction with the recent publication so that producer prices for fish intended for human consumption and industrial fish are also recorded separately for species other than Baltic herring. As considerably higher prices are paid for fish intended for human consumption than for industrial fish, the ratio between these two uses has a significant impact on the producer prices recorded for the fish species the majority of which ends up in industrial uses. Vendace, cyprinids and perch have industrial uses in addition to Baltic herring and sprat. In 2023, producer prices for vendace, pike, bream and roach intended for human consumption increased, whereas those for perch, pikeperch and burbot decreased.

Producer prices for fish sold for human consumption

€/kg*



Background to the statistics

The media release covers the statistics on commercial marine fishery and producer prices for fish.

Commercial marine fishery statistics are based on data collected by the Southwest Finland Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment (ELY) and the Provincial Government of Åland for the central national register on commercial fishery. Depending on the size of the vessel and the type of catch, all commercial fishers are obligated to report their catch immediately while the vessel is at sea, within 48 hours of landing the catch, or by the 20th day of the month following the end of the fishing month. Larger vessels have a satellite tracking system that allows the authorities to monitor the vessel's movement.

From 2023, statistics on producer prices of fish are based exclusively on first sale purchase notifications submitted by first-hand buyers of fish to the Southwest Finland ELY Centre. Until 2022, data on prices paid for fish species other than those regulated by catch quotas were also collected by targeting a panel survey at 20–30 first-hand buyers of fish, and until 2021, data on prices for fish species without any catch quotas were almost exclusively based on these data. In 2022, the Southwest Finland ELY Centre started to supervise the fish purchase notifications defined in Council Regulation (EC) No. 1224/2009, including for fish species other than those with catch quotas. As a result, the data included in the fish producer statistics are much more comprehensive from 2022 than in the previous years and also cover fish purchased for use as feed, including species other than Baltic herring and sprat. Producer prices for fish intended for human consumption and industrial fish were published separately for all species recorded in the statistics in conjunction with the statistical publication for 2023. Time series for producer prices for fish intended for human consumption are available from 2000 in Luke's statistics database.

Statistical publication

See statistics data related to the news in the statistical publication.

→ [Commercial marine fishery 2023](#)

→ [Producer prices for fish 2023](#)

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