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# CAPPMA Vice President Wang Xueguang: China’s seafood exports will grow 7 to 8 percent in 2024

"Cheaper products have been more in demand."



Mark Godfrey published in Supply & Trade



CAPPMA Vice President Wang Xueguang | Photo by Cliff White/SeafoodSource

China’s seafood exports will grow by 7 to 8 percent in 2024, similar to levels reached in 2023, according to Wang Xueguang, the vice president of the China Aquatic Products Processing and Marketing Alliance (CAPPMA), a Beijing-based organization affiliated with China’s Ministry of Agriculture.

Wang said that he expects stability in global seafood markets in 2024 as demand stabilizes and inflation ebbs in key export markets. But he’s also wary of trade friction and said the global seafood market remains characterized by low prices. According to Wang, China’s seafood industry has traditionally been export-oriented and, in a low-margin environment, companies find it “more straightforward” to stick with exports rather than seeking to develop the domestic market.

“In China, consumption demand is weak but there is stronger demand for low-priced seafood products. It’s a similar situation for exports – the cheaper products have been more in demand,” he told SeafoodSource at the 2024 Seafood Expo Global in Barcelona, Spain.

With consumer sentiment remaining depressed at home in the context of [slower economic growth](#), Chinese seafood firms have looked anew to exports as a driver of sales. While making exports more competitive, the depreciation of the renminbi has [pushed many of China’s seafood companies to increase exports](#) and hold dollars as a store of value.

Reflecting that renewed interest in international markets, China’s seafood industry was back in large numbers at the recent Seafood Expo Global, including 130 Chinese companies that traveled in CAPPMA’s delegation.

"The number of companies and floor space of Chinese companies increased this year," Wang said.

Wang said he wasn’t worried about recent [allegations of forced labor being used in Chinese seafood processing facilities](#) and [onboard Chinese fishing vessels](#), even as several major U.S. importers have [announced their annulment of processing partnerships in China](#). Wang described the reports as “fake news,” echoing [a statement posted on CAPPMA’s website](#) in response to the Outlaw Ocean report detailing the use of Uyghur laborers in Chinese seafood facilities.

“The report, without any factual basis, speculates that employing Uyghur workers is equivalent to forced labor and encourages companies in the U.S. and E.U. to boycott seafood from related Chinese processing plants which have been falsely alleged,” it said.

A few U.S. politicians [have pushed for a ban on Chinese seafood](#) in response to the reports, and both major U.S. presidential candidates – U.S. President Joe Biden and former U.S. President Donald Trump – have called for an [increase in tariffs on Chinese goods](#) in the run-up to U.S. federal elections in November 2024. Trump is likely to go farther than Biden in continuing the Sino-U.S. trade war [he initiated with tariffs beginning in 2018](#).

Despite the tariffs on many seafood products, [which remain in place](#), Wang said he believes China retains a competitive edge on key seafood commodities imported by the U.S., including shrimp.

“Where will American importers find suppliers as cheap and efficient as Chinese companies? Perhaps America can import more Indian shrimp, but the Indian processing industry is not yet as developed as the Chinese one,” Wang said.

Regardless, Wang said, China has become less reliant on the U.S. as an export destination. China’s seafood exports to the United States – China’s second-biggest market by value – decreased 14.4 percent by volume and 21.6 percent by value year on year in 2023. There was a 31 percent drop in shipments of fish fillets to the U.S. from China in 2023.

“The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is now China’s top export destination,” he said. “Southeast Asia is a very complimentary market for China because the dietary habits of many consumers there are quite similar to those of China. Products like fish balls are very popular in Singapore but also in China.”

Southeast Asia is also continuing to build its status as major source of premium live seafood for Chinese buyers.

“China’s demand for grouper, eel, and lobster is strong and Southeast Asian nations export to this market,” he said.

However, ASEAN countries, including growing seafood powerhouse Vietnam, are [emerging as threats to China’s preeminence in seafood processing](#), as Chinese firms [struggle to make up ground lost during the years of strict Covid-related policies](#) in China.

In overall terms, China’s exports remain below the pre-pandemic period, when volumes exceeded 4 million metric tons annually from 2017 to 2019. Processed fish and fish fillets continue to make up the bulk of China’s exports, Wang said.

China’s processors have found one new source of business, as Russian pollock now banned from entering the U.S. is rapidly growing more popular with Chinese consumers, according to Wang. Chinese processors have been challenged to find alternatives after the administration of U.S. President Joe Biden [banned Russian-sourced seafood from entering the U.S.](#) market, even from third countries such as China.

“Chinese middle-class consumers have become more familiar with and accepting of the processed cod products which were heretofore exported,” Wang said. “Also cod and pollock are becoming more and more accepted in the Chinese market as a low-cost and nutritious product.”

Overall [Chinese demand for seafood is rising](#), Wang said, driven by rural consumers encouraged to eat more fish by government health programs that have touted seafood’s dietary benefits. China’s requirements for seafood imports could more than treble to as high as 18 million metric tons (MT) by 2030, [according to a 2021 report](#).

“China will become the world’s number-one market for [imported] seafood,” Wang said.

Wang was upbeat on China’s seafood trading relationship with Japan, which remained the top customer for Chinese seafood exports in 2023. Wang confirmed China [continues to import Japanese seafood from areas outside the Fukushima region](#), where releases of radioactive wastewater from the crippled Fukushima-Daichi nuclear power plant [led China and other countries](#) to place a ban on Japanese seafood.







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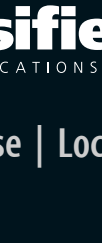
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