

Beche-de-mer trade statistics for Hong Kong in 2012

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Sea cucumbers are presently overfished and proper management of this resource is urgently needed (Purcell et al. 2013). The availability and quality of major market statistics are important tools for understanding the evolution of sea cucumber exploitation and trade routes (Conand 1993; Jaquemet and Conand 1999). Hong Kong is considered to be the major trade hub for the trade in sea cucumbers and as such, plays an important role in the import and re-export of dried sea cucumber product (referred to as either beche-de-mer or *trepan*). Following the recent paper by To and Shea (2012) on the patterns and dynamics of the beche-de-mer trade in Hong Kong for over 16 years (from 1996 to 2011), this paper presents the latest available data for 2012. The statistics are extracted from the database of the Census and Statistics Department of the Government of Hong Kong (Special Administrative Region). Table 1 presents the code and description of the imports and re-exports (exports are not taken into account here, as only negligible quantities are presented).

It is important to note that these codes have recently changed, but unfortunately the data are not presented by species. Table 2 presents the quantities (in kg) imported into Hong Kong and the countries of origin (when more than 1,000 kg are reported).

The code 03081990 corresponds to traditional beche-de-mer, and deserves more attention because in the other categories the weights are subjected to variations. It corresponds to the former code 03079930, which was used in To and Shea (2012).

Imports in 2012 totalled 5,121 tonnes (t) and re-exports totalled 4,644 t, which shows a decrease from previous data. In total, 59 countries export volumes of over 1 t to Hong Kong; the main countries in order of importance are Japan, Philippines, Indonesia, Fiji, USA and Madagascar. In the previous study, the order was Indonesia, Philippines, Papua New Guinea, Fiji and Japan, which indicates important changes.

Re-exports concern mostly Việt Nam, which was already mentioned in the previous study but which deserves more attention, as this has been apparent from the statistics since 2002 and remains unclear. From the other categories presented in the statistics, the importance of imports from Mexico and Peru seems to be increasing. Singapore and Taiwan still appear as markets exchanging products with Hong Kong as was described by Conand (1993) and Jaquemet and Conand (1999). China (mainland) remains a major importer of frozen and smoked products (code 03081910), but its importance has decreased during the last period.

Table 1. Hong Kong beche-de-mer codes of imports (country of origin), re-exports (country of consignment) and exports in 2012.

Live animals; Animal products (Chapters 1–5)	
HKHS Code	Commodity description (shown by common product name)
03081110	Sea cucumbers (<i>Stichopus japonicus</i> , Holothurioidea), for cultivation
03081190	Sea cucumbers (<i>Stichopus japonicus</i> , Holothurioidea), live (other than those for cultivation), fresh or chilled
03081910	Sea cucumbers (<i>Stichopus japonicus</i> , Holothurioidea), frozen, including those smoked
03081990	Sea cucumbers (<i>Stichopus japonicus</i> , Holothurioidea), dried, salted or in brine, including those smoked
Prepared foodstuffs; Beverages, spirits and vinegar; Tobacco (Chapters 16–24)	
HKHS Code	Commodity description (shown by common product name)
16056100	Sea cucumbers, prepared or preserved

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Table 2. Statistics for sea cucumbers (in kg) in Hong Kong for 2012 (see Table 1 for categories).

Main countries	Category 1190		Category 1910		Category 1990		Category 6100	
	Imports	Re-exports	Imports	Re-exports	Imports	Re-exports	Imports	Re-exports
Total 2012	125,325	44,883	2,743,383	1,675,963	5,121,071	4,644,853	20,656	174
Australia and Oceania					78,199			
Australia			232,442	232,442	76,185	3,045		
Canada	2,496	173	922,101	3,720	104,504	13,131		
Chile	3,135				2,894			
China mainland			254,690	691,670	65,904		14,000	
Croatia					2,894			
Cuba					7,096			
Djibouti					2,748			
Dominican Republic					6,209			
Egypt					45,427			
Fiji					390,221			
Gabon					1,115			
Guatemala					1,150			
Greece					14,367			
Haiti					32,157			
Honduras			33,433					
Iceland			104,940					
India					4,317			
Indonesia					419,483			
Jamaica					2,500			
Japan	23,052		430,977		561,481			
Kenya					20,672			
Korea			21,345		154,853	63,988		
Kiribati					76,778			
Macao						7,393		
Madagascar					311,664			
Malaysia			3,327		38,867	3,256		
Maldives					109,478			
Marshall Islands					48,659			
Mauritania					41,077			
Mauritius					8,382			
Mexico	13,267		121,736		208,549		6,420	
Micronesia*					26,675			
Morocco					9,697			
Mozambique					15,033			
Netherlands			6,400					
New Zealand					2,540			
Nicaragua					6,804			
Pakistan			2,685	4,906				
Panama					20,348			
Peru					214,942			
Philippines					459,112			
Russia					111,741			
Saudi Arabia					22,160			

Main countries	Category 1190		Category 1910		Category 1990		Category 6100	
	Imports	Re-exports	Imports	Re-exports	Imports	Re-exports	Imports	Re-exports
Senegal					1,940			
Seychelles					100,671			
Sierra Leone					10,270			
Singapore			16,500		104,792	26,103		
Solomon Islands					5,679			
South Africa					1,099			
Sri Lanka					246,651			
Sudan					5,258			
Taiwan			23,087	125,013	119,253	149,492		
Tanzania					74,297			
Thailand					47,200	6,903		
Tonga					67,677			
Tunisia					2,119			
Turkey			79,915		24,636			
United Arab Emirates					5,606			
Ukraine					6,613			
Uruguay					1,056			
USA	82,203		464,224	55,683	330,645	15,986		154
Việt Nam		44,710		769,480	2,278	4,353,787		
Yemen					228,312			

* Micronesia = Federated States of Micronesia and Palau
USA = United States of America

A few photos were taken by Kathleen Ho in the Sheung Wan area where the dried seafood street (Des Voeux Road west) is located (Figs. 1 and 2). Drying products in the street occurs occasionally year-round, possibly because the imported product

was not up to the dried standard or because of Hong Kong's relatively humid weather. The authors noted that the quantities of products drying on the street seemed greater than ever before, perhaps because of the approaching Chinese New Year festivities (Fig. 3).



Figure 1. Beche-de-mer in Hong Kong: drying in Des Voeux Road west (left) and in a shop (right). (Images: Kathleen Ho/BLOOM)



Figure 2. Beche-de-mer sold in shops, with some prices (in HKD⁴) displayed. (Images: Kathleen Ho/ BLOOM)



Figure 3. Advertisement for discounts on Japanese beche-de-mer for the Chinese New Year. (Image: Kathleen Ho/ BLOOM)

References

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⁴ HKD 1.00 = USD 0.13 (as of March 2014)