Global fish production to reach 200.5 MT in 2026 as Aquaculture growth offsets decline in capture fisheries: FAO

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FAO projects aquaculture-led expansion of 2.9% while capture fisheries contract on tighter quotas, El NiÃ±o risks, and North Atlantic stock constraints, reshaping global seafood supply and trade flows

Global fisheries and aquaculture production is forecast to reach 200.5 million tonnes in 2026, an increase of 1.0 percent compared with 2025, according to the latest outlook from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. The overall growth masks a deep structural divergence within the sector, with aquaculture continuing to expand steadily while capture fisheries face tightening biological limits, regulatory constraints, and climate-related volatility. Aquaculture output is expected to rise by 2.9 percent to 108.7 million tonnes, driven by stronger harvests of carp, shrimp, and salmon, while capture fisheries are projected to decline by 1.1 percent to 91.8 million tonnes due to reduced quotas in key stocks and adverse climatic conditions, including expected El Niño impacts affecting the Peruvian anchoveta fishery and continued scientific tightening of North Atlantic cod catch limits.

Global trade in aquatic animal products is projected to reach $ 202.3 billion in 2026, reflecting a 2.5 percent increase year-on-year, even as traded volumes remain broadly stable at 71.1 million tonnes in live weight equivalent, indicating that value growth is increasingly outpacing physical expansion. On the import side, China and the European Union remain the dominant global buyers, with China's import value expected to grow by around 3 percent and the European Union by about 7 percent, supported by sustained consumer demand and diversified sourcing strategies. In contrast, the United States is expected to record a 4 percent decline in imports, as tariff measures and related trade disruptions weigh particularly on shrimp, tilapia, and processed fish products, reshaping global seafood trade flows and redirecting volumes toward alternative markets.

On the export side, Norway and Viet Nam are expected to lead global gains in export value, with growth of around 4 percent and 7 percent respectively, underpinned by strong aquaculture performance and resilient demand in key destination markets.

Norway continues to consolidate its position as a leading global seafood exporter, with salmon exports reaching 1.4 million tonnes valued at $ 12.4 billion, supported by strong shipments to the United States and expanding Asia-Pacific demand, which rose 12 percent in volume terms. Viet Nam's gains are similarly supported by diversified aquaculture exports and processed seafood trade. Ecuador, India, and Chile also remain central to global supply dynamics, with Ecuador's shrimp exports rising to 1.4 million tonnes worth $ 8.5 billion, reflecting strong demand from China, the United States, and Spain, while India shipped 804,000 tonnes of shrimp valued at $ 5.7 billion, influenced by tariff-driven trade shifts and front-loading of exports ahead of higher US duties. Chile continues to reinforce its role as a key salmon supplier to North American markets, particularly the United States, where import demand remains structurally strong despite price fluctuations.

Shrimp trade expanded significantly in 2025, rising 4.1 percent in volume to 4 million tonnes and 10.7 percent in value to $ 29.7 billion, with strong import growth in both the United States and the European Union, which increased purchases by 8.7 percent and 9.4 percent respectively. Salmon trade also remained robust, supported by rising consumption in the United States and Asia-Pacific, where imports increased by 7 percent to 513,000 tonnes and 12 percent to 705,000 tonnes respectively, even as price dynamics softened in some markets. In contrast, tuna trade weakened, declining by 5.7 percent to 3.3 million tonnes, driven by a sharp fall in frozen skipjack imports and weaker demand for processed tuna products following tariff increases in the United States, which affected supply chains across China, Thailand, the Philippines, and Viet Nam. Despite volume declines, skipjack prices remained relatively stable at around $ 1,500 per tonne CFR Thailand in May 2026.

Global fish prices have strengthened notably, with the FAO Fish Price Index averaging 127 points in the first four months of 2026, its highest level since 2022 and about 8 percent higher than the same period in 2025. The increase has been driven primarily by the capture fisheries segment, where reduced supply of pelagics and whitefish pushed the index sharply higher, while aquaculture prices remained relatively stable despite firming trends in salmon and shrimp. Overall, the outlook highlights a global seafood economy increasingly shaped by aquaculture-led expansion, tightening capture fisheries supply, and shifting trade patterns influenced by tariffs, logistics disruptions, and evolving demand centres, particularly in Asia, Europe, and North America.