

Voluntary Report – Voluntary - Public Distribution

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Report Name: A Booming Venezuelan Seafood Industry

Country: Venezuela

Post: Caracas

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Report Highlights:

Venezuelan seafood production totaled 241,000 MT in 2021, growing by 16 percent compared to 2020. Seafood products are Venezuela's largest agricultural export, accounting for more than 54 percent of the total value of agricultural exports in 2021. Seafood exports have increased 174 percent since 2016 and in 2021, totaled \$361.7 million. The major exported seafood products are shrimp, crab, and fish. The primary markets are the European Union (shrimp) and the United States (crab and fish). Aquaculture shrimp production grew 157 percent since 2016 and was the leading agricultural export product in 2021. The Venezuelan shrimp industry is an expanding business, is highly specialized, and employs leading technologies and production practices. In 2021, Venezuela imported 363,325 MT of soybean meal, of which 94 percent was U.S. origin.

Venezuelan Seafood Production

Commercial fishing has a long history in Venezuela due to more than 2,000 kilometers of coastline and watersheds with rivers and lakes with excellent fish production potential. In 2021, total seafood production in Venezuela was 241,000 MT, according to official Venezuelan government estimates, growing by 16 percent compared to 2020. According to official statements, by the end of 2022, seafood production is forecast to increase by 4 to 5 percent, reaching 250,000 MT. In 2021, 83 percent of seafood production came from wild caught fishing and 17 percent from the aquaculture industry.

Wild Caught Seafood Production

Industrial fishing in Venezuela focuses on tuna on the Venezuelan continental shelf and in the eastern Pacific. This type of production represents 50 to 60 percent of total fish production and is primarily exported. In recent years, tuna production has grown, with exports increasing by 243 percent between 2016 and 2021. The artisanal wild caught fishing sector is comprised of individuals, families, and small cooperatives using small-scale, low-tech, and low-capital fishing practices. Their catch is primarily unprocessed for local consumption. They account for the remaining 40 to 50 percent of seafood production, and their primary products are sardine, pepitona clam (turkey wing ark clam), and blue crab. Other fish of relevance in the local market but produced in smaller volumes include corvina, carite or king mackerel, pargo or common seabream, jurel, and catfish.

Aquaculture Production

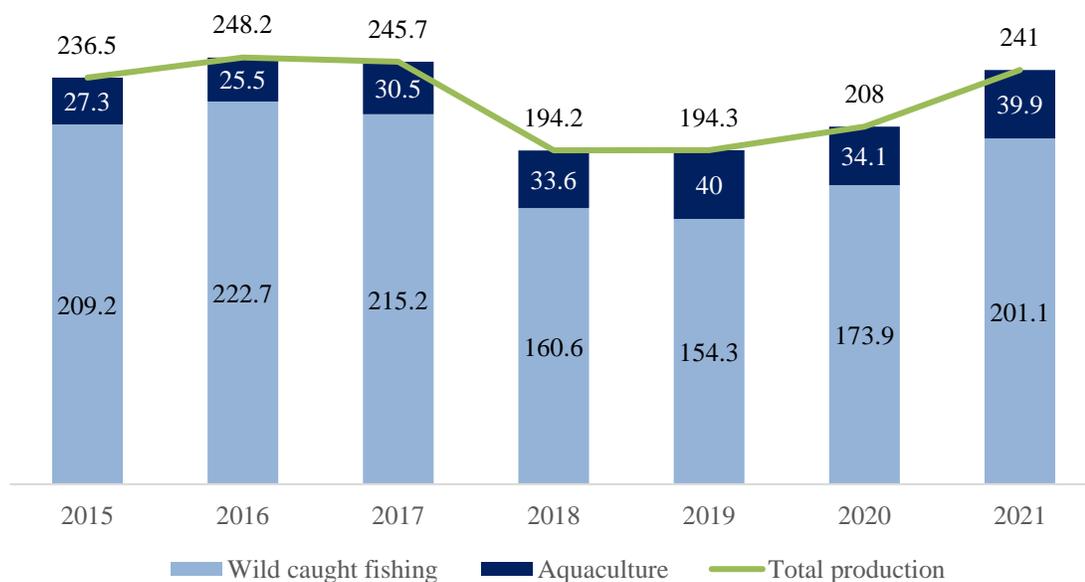
Industrial shrimp farming represents the largest proportion of aquaculture production in Venezuela. The rest comes mostly from freshwater fish farming, especially cachama and rainbow trout. Total aquaculture production in 2021 in Venezuela is estimated at 39,900 MT, growing by 54 percent since 2016. Most of this growth was driven by the increase in shrimp production, which accounted for 88 percent of total production in 2021 and is mostly destined for export.

Table 1: Seafood Production in Venezuela, 2015 – 2021 (thousand MT)

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Artisanal Fishing	110.6	79.7	110.0	74.8	83.0	88.7	91.5
Industrial Fishing	98.6	143.0	105.2	85.8	71.3	85.2	109.6
Artisanal Aquaculture	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.6	4.7	4.9	4.9
Industrial Aquaculture	22.8	21.0	26.0	29.0	35.3	29.2	35.0
Total Production	236.5	248.2	245.7	194.2	194.3	208.0	241.0

Sources: FAO, Global Aquaculture Alliance, Trade Data Monitor, FAS Caracas

Figure 1: Seafood Production in Venezuela by Production Type, 2015 – 2021 (thousand MT)



Data Source: FAO, Global Aquaculture Alliance, Trade Data Monitor, FAS Caracas

Seafood Legal and Institutional Framework

Fishing and aquaculture practices in Venezuela are regulated by the [Fishing and Aquaculture Law](#) (Ley de Pesca y Acuicultura) of 2003. This law is intended to promote the integral development of the sector, emphasizing the availability of products for the local market, favoring the artisanal fishing sector and biodiversity. The Ministry of Fishing and Aquaculture (MPA) is responsible for regulating and promoting the national fisheries and aquaculture sectors. MPA promotes production, industry development, and related marketing activities that support domestic product demand and encourage international trade. In addition, MPA regulates the fisheries and aquaculture sectors through the Fishing and Aquaculture Institute (INSOPESCA), the regulatory arm of MPA.

Seafood Consumption

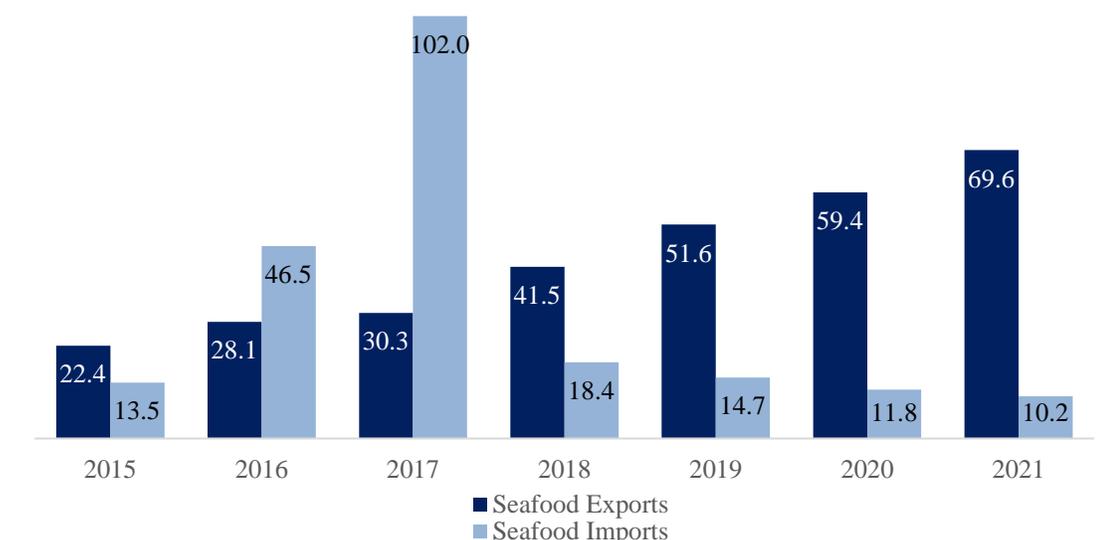
According to private industry, per capita consumption of seafood in 2021 in Venezuela was 2.5 to 3.5 kg, representing only 5 percent of total animal protein consumption. In 2000, before the Bolivarian revolution, per capita consumption reached 14.5 kg and accounted for 20 percent of total animal protein. Since then, its share has declined compared to other types of animal protein, when economic conditions and preferences favored the consumption of chicken and beef. Currently, Venezuelan consumption is based on cheap fish and canned fish products, such as tuna and sardines. Traditionally, the consumption of the most valuable fresh fish products is focused in coastal areas, but its variations have always been related to the availability and price of other proteins.

Trade

Seafood Exports

In 2021, seafood products accounted for more than 54 percent of the value of Venezuelan agricultural exports and have grown 173.5 percent since 2016. In 2021, Venezuela exported 28.9 percent of its total production. This is a mature industry focused on exporting shrimp, crab, and fish and involves industrial or artisanal production, depending on the product. The major markets are Europe, the United States, and, more recently, Asia. In 2021, the most exported seafood products were shrimp (US \$184.9 million, 51.1 percent) and crabs (US \$62.4 million, 17.3 percent), and the main export destinations were the European Union (US \$170.5 million, 47.1 percent) and the United States (US \$119.7 million, 33.1 percent).

Figure 2: Venezuelan Seafood Trade, 2015 – 2021 (thousand MT)



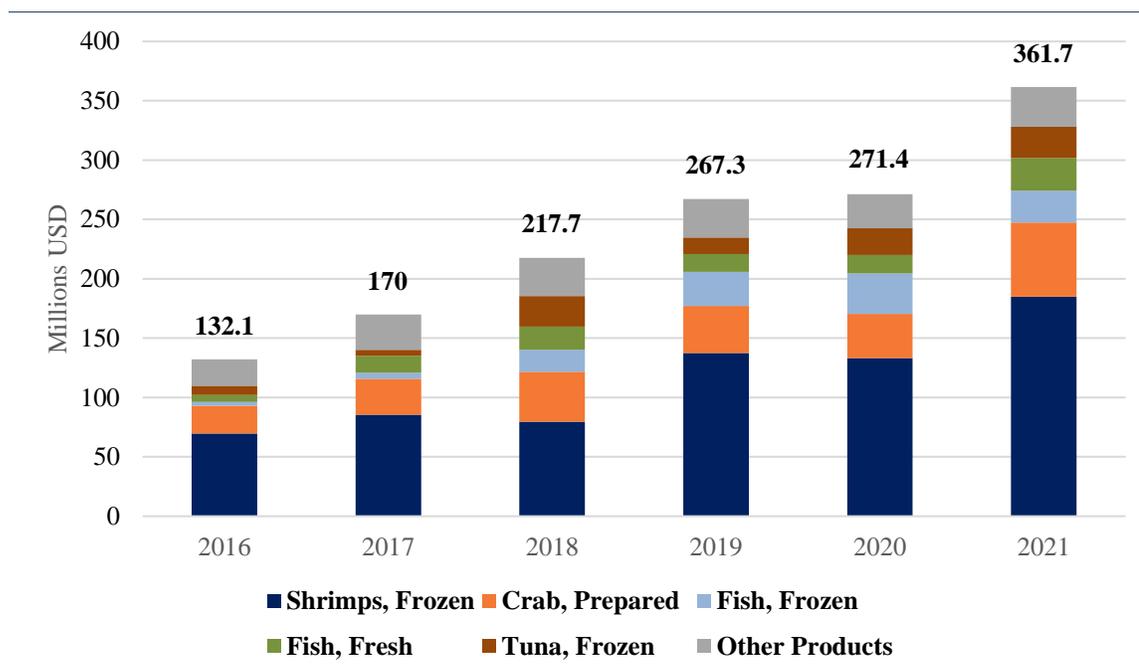
Source: Trade Data Monitor

Table 2: Value and Volume of Venezuelan Seafood Exports, 2016-2021

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	% CHG 2016-2021
Seafood Exports (thousand MT)	28.13	30.33	41.46	51.64	59.42	69.63	146%
Seafood Exports (millions USD)	132.1	170.0	217.7	267.3	271.4	361.7	173%
AVG Price \$/MT	4,698	5,604	5,250	5,176	4,567	5,190	11%

Source: Trade Data Monitor

Figure 3: Top Five Venezuelan Seafood Products Exported (USD millions), 2016-2021



Source: Trade Data Monitor

Table 3: Venezuelan Seafood Exports by Country and Product in 2021

Export Destination	Top Ven. imports (USD million)	Total Ven. Imports (USD million)	Market Share of Ven. Exports
EU-27	Shrimp (\$160.0) Other products (\$7.1) Fish frozen (\$3.3)	\$170.5	47%
United States	Crab (\$62.4) Fish frozen (\$23.5) Fish fresh (\$14.4) Other products (\$12.5) Shrimp (\$6.9)	\$119.7	33%
Guatemala	Tuna (\$21.2) Shrimps (\$0.5)	\$21.7	6%
China	Shrimp (\$15.9)	\$15.9	4%
Ecuador	Other products (\$7.3) Tuna (\$5.2) Fish fresh (\$0.1)	\$12.5	4%
Other countries	Fish fresh (\$12.4) Other products (\$6.5) Shrimp (\$1.6) Fish frozen (\$0.9)	\$21.4	6%
TOTAL	Shrimp (\$184.9)	\$361.7	-

	Crab (\$62.4)		
	Other products (\$33.4)		
	Fish frozen (\$27.7)		
	Fish fresh (\$26.8)		
	Tuna (\$26.4)		

Source: Trade Data Monitor

Seafood Imports

In 2021, seafood products accounted for only 1.3 percent of the value of Venezuelan agricultural imports and have declined 78 percent in volume since 2016. In 2021, the most imported seafood products to Venezuela were tuna (\$15.48 million, 46.7 percent) and prepared fish (\$7.42 million, 22.4 percent). The main origins of imports were China (\$9 million, 27.2 percent) and Ecuador (\$8.53 million, 25.7 percent).

Table 4: Venezuelan Seafood Imports by Country and Product in 2021 (USD million)

	Tuna, Prep.	Fish, Prep.	Salmon, Frozen	Sardine, Prep.	Squid, Frozen	Other Prod.	Total	% by country
China	5.76	1.86	-	0.90	-	0.51	9.03	27%
Ecuador	5.16	3.21	-	-	-	0.16	8.53	26%
Brazil	1.65	0.81	-	0.08	-	0.62	3.17	10%
Chile	-	-	1.79	-	-	1.18	2.96	9%
USA	0.39	0.23	0.04	-	0.69	1.22	2.57	8%
Other	2.52	1.31	0.18	0.14	0.46	2.32	6.93	21%
Total	15.48	7.42	2.01	1.12	1.14	6.01	33.19	-
% by product	47%	22%	6%	3%	3%	18%	-	-

Source: Trade Data Monitor

Between 2020 and 2021, the value of Venezuelan imports of seafood products increased by 24 percent and is likely to increase further in 2022. U.S. seafood products still maintain a low market share, estimated at 8 percent by value in 2021. The products with the most significant growth potential for U.S. exporters are prepared tuna (HS-160414), and prepared fish (HS-160420).

For more information on how to export to Venezuela, please see [FAS Caracas's 2022 Food and Agricultural Import Regulations and Standards \(FAIRS\) Country Report](#), and [FAS Caracas's 2022 Food and Agricultural Import Regulations and Standards \(FAIRS\) Certificate Report](#).

Venezuelan Seafood Trade with the United States

Venezuelan agricultural exports to the United States grew by 178 percent since 2016, totaling \$174.2 million in 2021 and accounting for 26 percent of Venezuela's total agricultural exports. In 2021, seafood

products made up 69 percent of total exports to the United States. The United States is a long-standing market for Venezuelan seafood exports, with peak exports of 23,000 MT and \$130 million in 2004.

The top seafood product exported to the United States is blue crab. Crab exports to the United States have grown 167 percent since 2016 and in 2021 totaled \$65.4 million, accounting for 52 percent of seafood exports. The second most important category of seafood products exported to the United States is fresh or frozen fish, totaling \$37.9 million in 2021. Shrimp exports to the United States reached \$27.1 million in 2019 but have declined significantly since then, totaling \$6.9 million in 2021.

Table 5: Venezuelan Seafood Exports to the United States by Product, 2016-2021 (USD million)

Product	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	% CHG 2016-2021
Crab	23.3	30.2	42.3	39.5	37.2	62.4	167%
Shrimp	16.6	12.7	19.9	27.1	10.2	6.9	-58%
Fish, Fresh	2.3	9.6	13.1	11.5	13.0	23.5	910%
Fish, Frozen	1.0	1.9	6.4	10.2	9.1	14.4	1,353%
Tuna Fresh	7.9	12.9	16.7	15.7	15.3	3.6	-54%
Other Products	1.6	4.1	6.1	5.3	3.5	8.9	452%
Total	52.8	71.4	104.5	109.2	88.4	119.7	127%

Source: Trade Data Monitor

A Burgeoning Venezuelan Aquaculture Shrimp Industry

Venezuelan aquaculture shrimp production was estimated at 35,000 MT in 2021, representing an increase of 108 percent compared to the 16,800 MT in 2012. Venezuela currently has 36 shrimp operations with approximately 12,000 hectares of cultivation ponds distributed in the states of Trujillo, Anzoátegui, Sucre, Nueva Esparta, Mérida, Falcón, and Zulia. Around 11,000 hectares are located on the western coast, in the state of Zulia, and a smaller proportion in the state of Falcón. Although Venezuelan production has grown steadily, and despite the economic collapse, it is still minor compared to the world production and trade of aquaculture shrimp. In 2021, global trade in aquaculture shrimp was estimated at 4.5 million MT. In the Western Hemisphere, Ecuador accounts for more than half of the farmed shrimp supply with about 500,000 MT annually.

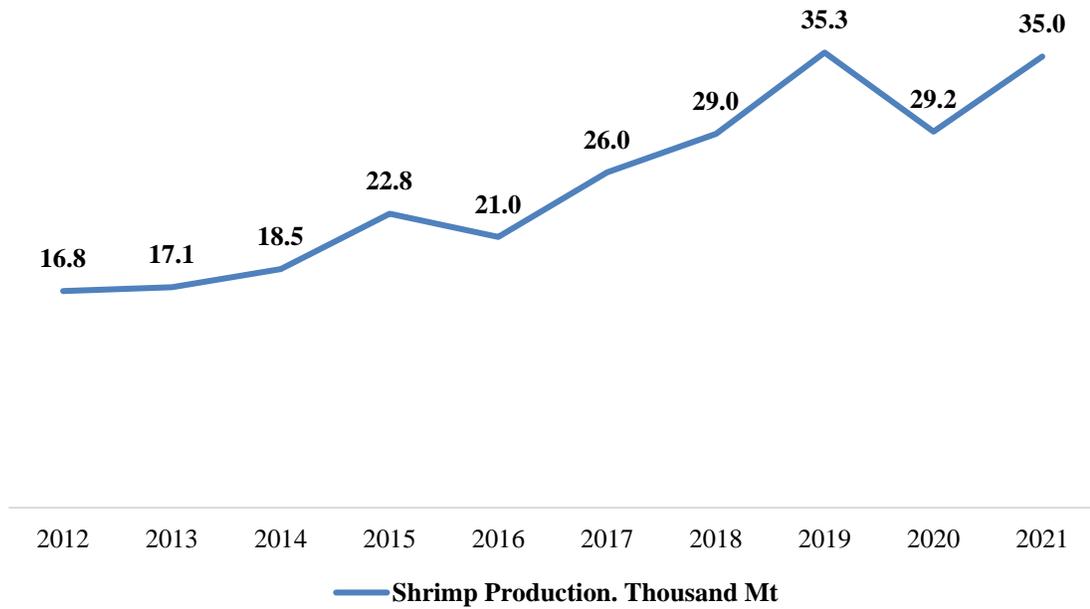
There are 16 new expansion projects under development in Venezuela, which total 4,000 hectares and will bring the total area of cultivation ponds to 16,000 hectares in 2022. According to the Venezuelan shrimp industry, the addition of more farming area and improvements in productivity will allow production to increase to about 50,000 MT by 2022.

The Association of Western Shrimp Producers (Asoproco) represents producers in Venezuela. The shrimp industry in Venezuela uses highly technical production methods and systems with competitive performance levels worldwide. The most advanced shrimp farms are now vertically integrated, having shrimp seed laboratories and feed plants to cover their consumption and supply independent shrimp

farms. Some of these companies have international quality, management, and food safety certifications such as Best Aquaculture Practices, Aquaculture Stewardship Council, and HACCP.

Although shrimp farming is one of the few industries that has grown in recent years, despite the economic crisis, it is also affected by persistent problems that are common to other industries including failures in the supply of electricity and fuel, poor infrastructure, port delays, and excessive bureaucracy that can complicate sanitary and environmental permits.

Figure 4: Volume of Aquaculture Shrimp Production in Venezuela, 2012-2021 (thousand MT)



Source: Global Aquaculture Alliance, FAS Caracas

Picture 1: Shrimp Farm on the Coast of Lake Maracaibo, Zulia State



Source: Venezuelan Shrimp Industry

Shrimp Feed Production and Trade

The domestic production of feed for shrimp was estimated at 52,500 MT in 2021, with an installed capacity of 180,000 MT. Local production meets 100 percent of fish feed demand and is manufactured using imported raw materials. Feed accounts for 55 to 60 percent of the operation costs in typical intensive systems and around 40 percent in semi-intensive systems. The average feed conversion ratio in Venezuela is 1.5:1. In other words, to produce 1 kilo of shrimp, 1.5 kg of feed is needed, depending on the intensity and efficiency of the system.

The major components of a typical 35 percent protein shrimp feed are wheat flour (35 percent), soybean meal (20 percent) and fishmeal (25 percent). In 2021, Venezuela imported 363,325 MT of soybean meal, of which 94 percent was U.S. soybean meal. Other components used in a minor proportion include fish oil, soy lecithin, vitamin and mineral premixes, and other additives such as binders, attractants, enzymes, and growth promoters. All aquaculture shrimp production in Venezuela is 100 percent antibiotic-free.

Picture 2: Shrimp Feed Mill near Maracaibo, Zulia State



Source: Venezuelan Shrimp Industry

Table 6: Estimated Raw Material Requirements for Shrimp Feed Production in Venezuela, 2021

Product	Inclusion Rate %	Requirements for 10,000 MT of Feed	Requirements for 52,500 MT of Feed
Wheat Flour	35	3,500	18,375
Soybean Meal	20	2,000	10,500
Fish Meal	25	2,500	13,125

Source: FAS Caracas

Shrimp Processing

There are 12 shrimp processing plants in the country, seven in the western region with an installed capacity of 350 MT per day and four in the eastern region with a capacity of 50 MT per day. Shrimp producers who are not vertically integrated sell their products directly to processing companies, which manage exports. Vertically integrated companies transport the production to their processing plants and

export it directly. Shrimp is exported headless, skinless, whole or in pieces, cooked or fresh, chilled, or frozen, depending on the market.

Shrimp Trade

The value of Venezuelan shrimp exports has grown by 167.7 percent since 2016, totaling \$184.9 million in 2021. Shrimp exports accounted for 51.1 percent of seafood exports and 27.7 percent of total agricultural exports in 2021. The primary market was the European Union, with 86.6 percent in 2021. Exports to this destination have increased more than 200 percent since 2016 due to the completion of quality certifications that the Venezuelan industry has obtained in recent years.

Since its beginnings in the late 1990s, the Venezuelan shrimp industry exported more than 90 percent of its production to the United States. However, the loss of competitiveness in that market and lower prices have influenced a major decrease in exports, from \$27.1 million in 2019 to merely \$6.9 million in 2021.

On April 30, 2020, the U.S. Department of State suspended the certification of wild-caught shrimp from Venezuela, making it ineligible for export to the United States. As a result, since then, wild-caught shrimp is not processed for export and is intended for the local market.

Table 7: Volume of Venezuelan Shrimp Exports by Country, 2016 – 2021 (MT)

Country	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	% In 2021	% CHG 2016-2021
EU-27	9,948	12,167	11,473	20,256	20,864	27,895	84.7	180%
China	-	-	-	-	3,817	3,549	10.8	-
U.S.A.	2,903	2,075	3,593	5,125	2,132	1,137	3.4	-61%
Other Co.	39	232	128	2,248	1,108	369	1.1	847%
Total	12,891	14,474	15,195	27,629	27,922	32,950	-	156%
\$ Price per Mt	5,419	5,915	5,230	4,980	4,770	5,611	-	4%

Source: Trade Data Monitor

Picture 3: Venezuelan Shrimp Packages in a Local Supermarket in Maracaibo, Venezuela



Source: FAS Caracas

Figure 5: Value of Venezuelan Shrimp Exports by Country, 2016 – 2021 (USD million)



Source: Trade Data Monitor

Picture 4: Shrimp Cultivation Pond in Zulia State



Source: Venezuelan Shrimp Industry

Picture 5: Shrimp Cultivation Pond in Zulia State



Source: Venezuelan Shrimp Industry

Picture 6: Shrimp Sample



Source: Venezuelan Shrimp Industry

Picture 7: Shrimp Sample



Source: Venezuelan Shrimp Industry

Venezuelan Blue Crab: A Staple Export to the United States

Unlike the highly industrialized sector of shrimp production, crab fishing is entirely artisanal with specialized local companies conducting processing and exports. There are 14 crab processing plants in the country, most of which are in Zulia state, located on the coast of Lake Maracaibo. This industry's primary crab meat products are backfin (jumbo lump), lump, special, claw, and cocktail fingers. Crab producers/fishers sell their products directly to processing companies, which oversee the export side.

The Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture regulates crab fishing, and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration monitors, through contractors, processing for export to the United States. Most of the processing and exporting plants are affiliated with the Venezuelan Association of Crab Processors (Asociación Venezolana de Productores e Industriales de Cangrejo-AVEPIC).

More than 95 percent of crab production in Venezuela is exported, with the United States being the only market. Crab is exported whole or in pieces, cooked or fresh, chilled, or frozen, depending on the destination. Some products are shipped via airfreight to the United States. Venezuelan crab meat processing facilities having long-standing relationships with distributors in Florida. Blue crab is the most valuable seafood product exported to the United States. In 2021, Venezuelan blue crab exports totaled 2,726 MT (\$62.42 million), growing 67.7 percent in value and 10.9 percent in volume from 2020, driven by an increase in the export price of more than 50 percent. Blue crab accounted for 35.8 percent of the total value of Venezuelan agricultural exports to the United States in 2021.

Table 8: Price per MT of Crab, 2016-2021

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	% CHG 2016-2021
\$ Price per MT Crab	13,950	12,786	14,608	13,550	15,146	22,895	64%

Source: Trade Data Monitor

Figure 6: Volume and Value of Venezuelan Crab Exports to the United States, 2016 to 2021



Data source: Trade Data Monitor

Attachments:

No Attachments.