The global ornamental aquarium industry: Facts and figures – Part 2

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In issue 77 of the OFI Journal (Feb. 2015), we published Part 1 of this report focusing on the export of ornamentals. In Part 2, I will emphasize the most important statistics and facts about the import of ornamental fish. I will also highlight some major trends and developments in our industry.

Note: Please be aware that the current resources of published statistics (FAO, UN Comtrade, International Trade Center) cannot always be accepted as 100% correct, as explained in Part 1.

Import stats summary
- Increased buying of smaller, cheaper fish. This creates lower-value invoices which could contribute to a drop in statistical value.
- The USA is the largest single importer.
- Yet, the European Union (United Countries of Europe) is 3 times bigger than the USA (Tables 1 & 2).

Table 1: Ornamental Fish Imports Top 10: US$ million: 2008-2012

Table 2: European Imports Top 10: US$ million: 2008-2012

- Both USA and Europe imported less in 2012—but we must ask ourselves the questions:
  - Is this due to the economic crisis?
  - Or is it maybe due to different statistical recording methods where invertebrates and others are not recorded in fish stats and are therefore missing? (See explanation in Part 1).
- Singapore is still importing fish from neighboring countries and this is mostly for re-export.

We notice an increase of imports into Hong Kong...for fish that are mostly re-exported to mainland China.

Japan has lower imports owing to its economic crisis (but Japan has experienced large increases in exports).

Growing regions
The Middle East and Asia are coming up as interesting markets for the aquarium industry. This is one of the reasons why OFI is looking to extend our contacts in these regions and distribute the news about OFI in the Asian countries (Table 3).

Table 3: Ornamental Fish Imports: US$ million by Region: 2008-2012

Adjusted stats
Below is an ‘adjusted’ statistical overview by continent (Table 4). It includes the missing statistical data for invertebrates, corals, etc., that I mentioned in Part 1, OFI Journal, No. 77.

In this connection, I also have to mention that India, China, Thailand, Brazil, Iran and other countries have many breeders that supply only local markets. Taken together, these account for many more million US$ than the current volume of trade which I presented in both Parts 1 + 2 of The global ornamental aquarium industry. I wish we had these data available because they would show us how large our ornamental fish industry really is.
Trends in the market
(Tables 5, 6, 7 and 8)

- Increased knowledge: our industry is still young (since 1950s?) but we are becoming more professional every year.
- High tech aquaria equipment is increasing in popularity.
- Breeding expertise is also improving.
- Quality of life: we have many more cities; people have higher $$$ incomes.
- We have to realize we live in a New Era: the ‘Anthropocene’ = mankind makes non-reversible changes; also some to our advantage!
- Laws, regulations and ethics don’t just exert a negative influence on our industry; we should not forget the positive influence: more awareness, more care, more knowledge, better quality, better service, etc.
- Increased variety of fish species: more color strains, more modified species, new varieties (also wild), many more tank-raised marine fish and corals, etc.

The goldfish is the top freshwater seller in the Netherlands.

PHOTO: JOHN DAWES

Freshwater 24 Top Sellers in The Netherlands
Note: Entries in blue = invertebrates (ref.: Aquafarm International/NL)

1. Goldfish (color var.)
2. Guppy
3. Cardinal tetra
4. Neon tetra
5. Corydoras
6. Rummy nose tetra
7. Platy
8. Oranda/Fantail
9. Molly
10. Ancistrus
11. Colisa
12. Caridina japonica
13. Swordtail
14. Plecostomus
15. Otocinclus
16. Clown loach
17. Beauparia/Sewellia
18. Ramirezi dwarf cichlid
19. Apl. normani bleu eye
20. Gyrinochelus aymonieri
21. Neocardina crystal red
22. Betta splendens (male)
23. Kryptopterus glass cat
24. Cambarellus dwarf lobster

Table 5: Freshwater 24 Top Sellers in The Netherlands

Marine 25 Top Sellers in The Netherlands
35% are invertebrates!
Note: Entries in blue = invertebrates (ref.: De Jong Marinell/NL)

1. Lysmata wurdemani
2. Cilbaniarius tricolor
3. Tectus spp.
4. Trochus spp.
5. Turbo grazers
6. Amphiprion ocellaris
7. Chromis viridis
8. Chrysiptera/Parasema/Cyanea
9. Pterosynchiropus splendidus
11. Valenciennea spp.
12. Gobies assorted
13. Dascyllus assorted
14. Nemateleotris magnifica
15. Zebrasoma flavescens
16. Labroides dimidiatus
17. Paracanthurus hepatus
18. Lysmata amboinensis
19. C. herbertaxelrodi
20. P. anisitsi
21. P. tetrazon
22. C. callistus callistus
23. D. rerio
24. P. reticulata
25. D. rerio red Glofish

Table 6: Marine 25 Top Sellers in The Netherlands

25 Top Sellers in the USA
Note: Entries in blue = invertebrates (ref.: Segrest Farms/USA)

1. Paracheirodon innesi
2. Carassius auratus Goldfish
3. Natantia Ghost shrimp
4. Hyphecosbrocon herbvertaxelrodi
5. Liposarcus anisitsi Pleco small
6. Puntius tetrazona
7. Hyph. callistus callistus
8. Danio rerio
9. Poecilia reticulata
10. Danio rerio Glofish
11. P. titeeya
12. D. rerio green Glofish
13. Hymenochirus Dwarf Frog
14. Carassius auratus Fantail
15. Danio rerio orange Glofish
16. Gymnocation ymber ternetzi
17. Gyrinochelus aymonieri
18. Xiphophorus maculatus
19. Liposarcus Pleco med
20. D. rerio Longfin
21. Paracheirodon axelrodi
22. Hyph. flamma “orange”
23. Xiphophorus helleri
24. Corydoras sp. mix
25. Phoxinus neogoaeus feed

Table 7: 25 Top Sellers in the USA
Marine 25 Top Sellers in the USA

60% are invertebrates!

Note: Entries in blue = invertebrates (ref: Segrest Farms/USA)

1. Blue Leg Hermit Crab Sml
2. Astrea Turbo Snail Atlantic Sml
3. Zebra Turbo Snail Med
4. Assorted Damsel Sml
5. Emerald Crab Sml
6. Condylactus Anemone Med
7. Peppermint Shrimp Sml
8. Mexican Turbo Snail Med
9. Green chromis Sml
10. Mexican Red Leg Hermit Crab Sml
11. Nassarius Snail Sml
12. Firefish Med
13. Ocellaris Clownfish Tank Raised Med
14. Cerith Snail Sml
15. Thin Stripe Hermit Crab Sml
16. Scarlet Reef Hermit Crab Sml
17. Skunk Cleaner Shrimp Med
18. Black Margarita Slime Eater Snail Sml
19. Yellowtail Blue Damsel Sml
20. Royal Grampa Med
21. Chocolate Chip Starfish Med
22. Ocellaris Clownfish Tank Raised Sml
23. Coral Beauty Angel Med
24. Lawn Mower Blenny Med
25. Feather Duster Philippines Med

Table 8: Marine 25 Top Sellers in the USA

Marine 25 Top Sellers in the UK (in alphabetical order)

35% are invertebrates!

Note: Entries in blue = invertebrates (ref: TMC/UK)

1. Blue Cheek Goby
2. Bubble Anemone - Coloured
3. Button Coral
4. Button Polyp
5. Chalk Goby
6. Chromis - Green
7. Cleaner Shrimp
8. Cleaner wrasse
9. Copperband Butterfly
10. Coral Beauty
11. Fire Shrimp
12. Firefish - Ind O
13. Flame Angel
14. Gramma - Royal
15. Hammerhead - Cultured
16. Lipstick Tang - Ind O
17. Mandarin
18. Powder Blue Tang
19. Regal Tang
20. Staghorn
21. Tank Bred Cardinal - Emperor
22. Tank Bred Clown - Common
23. Wreck Fish - Ind O
24. Wreck Fish - Pacific
25. Yellow Sailfin Tang

Table 9: TOP 25 Marine sales in alphabetical order from TMC/U.K.

The future: our expectations and warnings

- The market continues to grow and new markets will come up.
- For exporters and importers I would recommend: increase your variety and species! Marines should become part of your business.
- Follow the market interests and new markets. Follow changes in demand: shrimps, invertebrates, aquatic insects, etc.
- Install a good fish health management plan:
  - Investment in bio-security becomes an obligation.
  - Important to plan good welfare for all your aquatic creatures.
  - Good quality of fish means a sound business and higher profits.
- Work in accordance with laws and regulations: get involved with your national authorities, since most laws and regulations are adapted and implemented at national level (OFI tries to get involved at the international level, but you, as an OFI member, should be involved with your national authorities).
- Prevent invasive alien species (IAS) = introduction of invasive aquatic species in your local river or lake or your country could close your business!!!
- Stay informed by attending trade shows and conferences with OFI.