



## ORNAMENTAL AQUATIC TRADE ASSOCIATION LTD.

*"The Voice of the Ornamental Fish Industry"*

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Dear Secretary of State

I am writing to you on behalf of the Ornamental Aquatic Trade Association (OATA), which represents over 800 UK businesses involved in all aspects of the ornamental aquatic trade, including retailers, breeders, importers, and manufacturers, many of which are SMEs. This letter addresses our significant concerns regarding the potential imposition of reciprocal tariffs on USA-imported goods related to our sector, particularly live ornamental fish (commodity codes: 03011900 and 03011100).

Here we highlight the critical importance of the trade in aquatic pets to the UK economy, the importance of international trade to our sector and the potential negative impacts of tariffs on products imported from the USA.

### **Socio-economic importance of the sector**

The ornamental aquatic trade makes a substantial socio-economic contribution to the UK. Over 4 million households in the UK own fish, representing 14% of UK population, with over 100 million fish kept in home aquariums and garden ponds, making them the most populous pet in the UK. Fishkeepers spend over £660 million annually on their pets. The total economic value of the UK aquatic pet trade was over £1 billion in 2024, contributing over £211 million in VAT. The wider pet industry supports approximately 50,000 jobs within the UK, with an estimated 12,000 in aquatic-related businesses. Further to this, pet ownership in general is estimated to save the NHS at least £2.45 billion every year due to positive impacts on health and well-being.

### **Lack of domestic production for the sector**

A critical point is the very limited domestic production of aquarium-related products, including live ornamental fish. In addition, the majority of aquariums and associated goods, such as aquarium ornaments, heaters, and lights, are imported from third countries such as the USA, either as components or as completed items. Regarding live ornamental fish specifically, the current UK Global Tariff rightly maintains a 0% tariff on imports. This reflects the lack of significant domestic production and the importance of international trade to meet the diverse demands of UK fishkeepers.

### **Significance of US trade to the sector**

The USA is a significant source of products for our sector, many of which are not produced in significant quantities in the UK. In 2024, live ornamental fish imports generated an estimated £8.85 million in retail sales, including associated dry goods and aquarium plants, and the total economic value, considering the whole supply chain, is almost £12 million.\*

### **Existing pressures on the sector**

Our industry, being one that relies on discretionary spending, is disproportionately affected by the prevailing economic uncertainty. Increased energy prices disproportionately hit aquatic businesses which must continually run equipment (e.g. pumps, filters, heaters) to meet the welfare needs of animals in their

care. Reduced consumer confidence arising from the cost-of-living crisis has also significantly impacted the pet sector since the onset of increased inflation in 2022.

These factors, coupled with increased barriers to trade with the EU, are leading to lower margins and hinder the sector's ability to thrive and for some businesses to survive. The imposition of new tariffs on one of our key trading partners would further exacerbate the challenges faced by aquatic businesses in the UK.

A simplified tariff regime with reduced tariffs overall would be welcomed and deliver positive benefits to our industry. Imposing reciprocal tariffs on these imports would directly contradict the Government's mission for economic growth. Such tariffs would inevitably lead to increased costs for UK businesses, many of which are SMEs with tight margins. These increased costs could potentially translate to higher prices for consumers, reducing their spending power and discouraging the keeping of fish as pets. This would negatively impact the significant economic contribution our sector makes through consumer spending and tax revenue.

### **Concluding remarks**

Given the lack of domestic production for most ornamental fish species and aquarium products, tariffs would not serve to protect UK producers but would instead penalise UK businesses and consumers. We strongly urge you to consider the significant socio-economic importance of the ornamental aquatic trade, its reliance on imports due to limited domestic production, and the detrimental impact that reciprocal tariffs would have on our sector and the government's overall mission for growth.

We respectfully request that the Government consider the arguments outlined in this letter and refrain from imposing tariffs on pet fish. Maintaining the current tariff-free status for live ornamental fish is crucial for the continued growth and prosperity of our industry.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this important matter. We would be pleased to provide any further information you may require.

Yours sincerely



Dominic Whitmee  
Chief Executive

*\*These figures do not include the value of live invertebrates imported which cannot be separated from other sectors due to the commodity codes used. As such, the figures above are a conservative estimation of the value of US imports to the UK aquatic market.*