

30th anniversary
2021

Looking to the future

Annual Review
2020/21



Key facts about the industry



Ownership

OATA estimates there are 100 million+ pet fish kept in the UK

4 million

households own pet fish
14% of the population

Economic value

UK import value of ornamental fish

£15.7 million in 2020

Despite the twin effects of Covid-19 and the impacts of the UK's exit from the EU, the value remained remarkably stable in 2020, believed to be due to heightened interest in indoor/home-based hobbies such as fishkeeping.

Pet fish owners spend an estimated

£400 million annually on their hobby.



Employment

The pet industry employs over **50,000 people** of which an estimated

12,000

are employed by aquatic-related businesses

An estimated **8.5 million** customers a year visit aquatic retailers.

See our **Fishing for Facts** report for more information about the UK ornamental fish trade

ornamentalfish.org/what-we-do/represent-the-industry/fishing-for-facts



Where do fish come from?

In 2020, the UK imported ornamental fish from **40 countries**

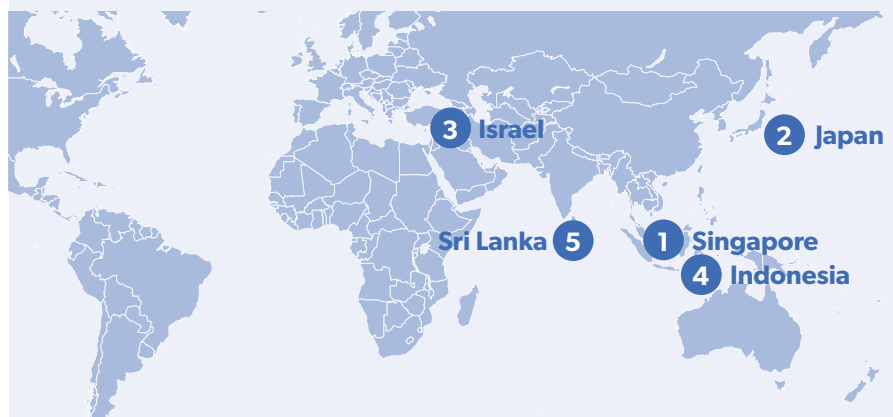
(compared with 47 countries in 2019). The reduction in exporting countries is thought to be a result of Covid-19 on flight availability.

31 countries (33 in 2019) exported freshwater fish

22 countries (28 in 2019) exported marine ornamental fish

(some countries export both marine and freshwater)

Top 5 countries exporting ornamental fish to the UK in 2020



Volumes of live ornamental fish coming into the UK

Exchange rate fluctuations makes freight weight a better indicator of fish imports. Since 2005 freight weight has steadily decreased which is probably a combination of improved ways to transport fish (most of the weight comprises water rather than the fish) as well as falling market demand (and therefore fewer fish).

2020 – 1,023 metric tonnes Split between freshwater and marine fish imports in freight weight

Freshwater fish – 2020           **77%**

Marine fish – 2020             **23%**

From the Chair

We are celebrating 30 years of OATA in 2021 and it seems a fitting year to reflect on what a trade association does for the businesses it represents. In this report you'll see some of the milestones achieved across the three decades, from stopping a ban on coldwater imports back in 1994 to launching aquatic specific training, ensuring shops have access to free customer care sheets, producing videos and launching the Wild Caught Report putting the case for much of the marine side of our industry.

I think OATA has certainly proved its worth over the past extraordinary year, not least helping businesses to stay open by ensuring the pet industry was seen as 'essential' by the Government. It's also been there for the businesses trying to navigate the difficulties at the border since the UK left the EU – there

has certainly been some hurdles to overcome to ensure Northern Irish businesses got what they need.

But we must also look forward and in particular we are all eagerly anticipating AQUA in Telford during October where we will be able to gather to meet in person again. There is so much to celebrate so don't forget to visit the OATA stand at the show.

In some ways the issues facing our industry continue to be the same – particularly around animal welfare and the trade in wildlife/exotic pet debate, which is why OATA has again invested in a new report about the UK industry to help Government ministers, officials and politicians put these campaigns into a context when it comes to ornamental aquatic species.

Thank you again to the businesses that support OATA's work through membership. We couldn't do it without you and if your business has not yet joined then please do consider it.

Matt Stevenson
Seneye Ltd



From the Chief Executive

In last year's report we reflected on a changing world, as the Covid-19 pandemic turned the world upside down and the UK left the European Union.

In what is our 30th year we reflect on what OATA has achieved over the past three decades to support and promote the industry. But we also want to look forward because there is so much to be optimistic about, both for our industry and the hobby. 2020's extraordinary turn of events meant more time at home for many people and they turned to indoor hobbies and their outside space for solace. That meant more people with time to set up their first aquarium, try a totally new tank set up or create a new garden pond.

There is still a job to do to ensure our politicians know more about our industry, especially in light of the increasing criticisms they hear from

people opposed to wildlife trade and animal keeping. We have published a new report, Fishing For Facts, setting out the facts about the trade in ornamental fish (the area which attracts the greatest attention) to hopefully dispel many of the myths and misunderstandings about our industry.

And to this end we must all strive to play our part in responsible and sustainable sourcing and in the care of the animals we sell. We know Scotland and Wales are turning their attention to pet shop licensing. We welcome this and will do our best to help highlight the lessons to be learned from the English review of animal activities.

We hope OATA has proved a useful source of help and information – not just during last year's extraordinary events but throughout our 30-year history. It's what we always strive for. We are always here to try to get answers, give advice,

interpret announcements, and seek legislative and policy changes so that our members can run their businesses as smoothly as possible. It's what we've spent the last 30 years doing and intend to continue to do.

Dominic Whitmee
Chief Executive



Representing our industry

It has been heartening to hear about the increased interest in fish keeping and building garden ponds during 2020. Despite continuing issues with importing fish because of restricted air transport, the appetite for tropical fish has not diminished. Nevertheless, the spotlight on wild collected and non-native species continues. This is not new but it remains a major focus of our work when representing the industry.

What we did during 2020-2021

Shining a spotlight on the UK trade

We have published a new report about the UK trade in ornamental fish called *Fishing for Facts* which has been sent to Ministers, UK MPs, Scottish MSPs and Welsh AMs, and Government departments across Westminster and the devolved administrations. The report aims to correct many misconceptions about the tropical fish trade and to shine a light on how industry plays a positive role in many policy areas. We want to combat the inaccuracies that can circulate about the origins and welfare of the fish we enjoy in our homes and gardens.

Attention on the pet industry from animal rights organisations, particularly on wild collected and exotic pets, has undoubtedly increased since the Covid-19 pandemic, focussing on a wide range of issues such as zoonotic diseases, invasive species, animal welfare and sustainability.

Fish welfare is coming under greater scrutiny and an example of this was the publication in March 2021 of a Fish Health Report from the Conservation Animal Welfare Foundation. While it focused largely on aquaculture it did refer to the transport of ornamental fish, albeit in a highly inaccurate way. We wrote to correct the lobbying group and hope it will not repeat these errors. But this does appear to be part of a wider lobbying effort by Eurogroup for Animals, which is campaigning on fish welfare.

International attention on marine ornamental fishes

CITES has decided to examine the conservation and trade in marine coral reef fishes. Trade restrictions and new controls are a potential outcome of this if

it is deemed the trade is not sustainable. This is a huge undertaking and we have joined forces with fellow global trade associations such as Ornamental Fish International (OFI) and the European Pet Organization (EPO) to present the trade's case. We remain concerned at the lack of consultation and involvement of the trade in the work being done and continue to make representations about the data being used to make decisions.

On a positive note, we were very pleased to see the CITES Animals Committee (AC) accept Indonesia's monitoring and conservation plan for Banggai Cardinalfish at its June 2021 meeting. We welcome this outcome as we believe that greater consideration should be given to the use of fisheries management

Attention on the pet industry from animal rights organisations, particularly on wild collected and exotic pets, has undoubtedly increased since the Covid-19 pandemic

OATA celebrated 30 years protecting and promoting the industry



1991

OFI UK set up

1992

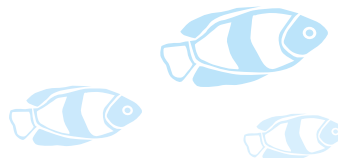
Members' Code of Conduct launched

1994

OATA stops ban on coldwater fish imports

1995

First customer posters with 'no release' message created
First training packages launched





measures for marine ornamental fishes, rather than the usual approach of applying restrictive trade controls.

Rationalising import controls

We have worked with various Government bodies to input into reviews of CITES Wildlife Trade Regulations and associated procedures, including proposals on streamlining CITES applications and an earned recognition scheme. We have worked with the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) to provide information about the trade in maricultured corals from Indonesia to assist in their consideration in making the non-detriment finding that is needed to enable the continued import of these species. We continue to offer assistance on updating the guide we prepared for the European Commission aimed at assisting enforcement officials in distinguishing maricultured from wild taken coral.

In 2021-2022 we will:

-  Promote our 'Fishing for Facts' report to continue to improve understanding about the ornamental fish industry and the benefits it brings.
-  Work with OFI and EPO to monitor and engage with CITES on its work on marine ornamental fishes.
-  Work closely with Government on its coral reef conservation agenda.
-  With fellow trade associations, respond to pet-related trade issues, including monitoring and countering any calls for bans, positive lists or other inappropriate controls in the UK.



1998

Ban on owning sturgeon halted

2002

Special fish bags for shops created

2004

OATA advises members not to sell 5 problem pond plants (later banned in 2013)

2005

Biosecurity document and calculator launched



Improving fish welfare standards



As an industry that trades in live animals we understand the need for good welfare standards from source country to home aquarium. We believe that picking the right pet for people's lifestyle and caring for it properly are key to happy and healthy pets. Pet shops play an incredibly important role in this. As a UK trade association, we have for many years lobbied for better standards across the four UK administrations so we are working with administrations in Scotland and Wales as they review their pet shop licensing systems.

What we did during 2020-2021

Pet shop licensing

Following new regulations on animal activities licensing in England, introduced in 2018, we worked with the Companion Animal Sector Council (CASC) to develop proposals for improvements to the current English guidance and we await an update from Defra on this. We also aim to feed into the formal review of the regulations due in 2023. Both Scotland and Wales are reviewing their licensing systems, although Covid-19 issues have undoubtedly slowed progress. We will use our membership of CASC and the Animal Welfare Network Wales (AWNW) to help amplify our voice for standards on fish, the most populous pet sold in pet shops.

Pet Know How

We continue to support The Pet Charity on its Pet Know How project. This online test aims to help prospective pet owners research their proposed new pet, giving them a certificate at the end to print off to present to pet sellers to show they have looked into the needs of the animal they want to buy. The project is jointly run by The Pet Charity, Companion Animal Sector Council, British Veterinary Zoological Society and British Small Animal Veterinary Association.

Action Plan for Animals

The Government has launched its English Action Plan for Animal Welfare which seeks to introduce animal sentience into law, including commissioning research into the sentience of decapod crustaceans and cephalopods, and a Kept Animals Bill. While the focus of the Kept Animals Bill is primates it does appear to have capacity to expand to other species and we will need to be vigilant about this. We are also aware that the Welsh Government has similar plans to look at animal welfare issues in the coming Senedd term.

As an industry that trades in live animals we understand the need for good welfare standards from source country to home aquarium.

2006

OATA joins Defra's Non-Native Species sounding board

2007

OATA works with OFI to prevent CITES listing of Banggai Cardinalfish
Trade association coalition ProPets formed to promote pets in society

2008

Council of Europe commissions OATA to co-write its Invasive species pet code

2009

GBNNS Be Plant Wise campaign launched with OATA backing
Seven YouTube videos on fishkeeping launched
40 customer care sheets launched









Animals in Transport

We have responded to several Government and Parliamentary consultations on animal transport. While the focus has largely been on movements of farm animals we always make sure we respond to these inquiries to show that our industry is well regulated when it comes to moving fish around the world. We want to avoid any unintended consequences that could have negative welfare implications for our sector.

Working together

We have joined a number of working groups under the Companion Animal Sector Council (CASC) umbrella. These are looking at education, animal activities licensing and online trade. Being a part of this larger group, which represents pets other than dogs, cats and horses, is an important way to amplify our voice to government.

In 2021-2022 we will:

-  Continue to work with bodies such as CASC to drive improvements in welfare standards for fish.
-  Respond to consultations and calls for evidence on any issues arising from the Government's Action Plan for Animals and respond to relevant proposals from the devolved administrations.
-  Seek to ensure that Scottish and Welsh proposals for pet shop licensing deliver high welfare standards for fish whilst keeping unnecessary burdens to a minimum.
-  Continue to support The Pet Charity in its development of Pet Know How and the Pet Portal.
-  Review our suite of customer care sheets to bring them up to date with the latest thinking.
-  Review our City & Guilds Foundation and Advanced OATA training packages to improve their content and widen their appeal to other potential audiences.



2010

Android smartphone app for fishkeepers launched

2013

DEFRA bans five pond plants – OATA ensures 3 top sellers remain

2014

Joint OATA/REPTA Code of Practice for Pet Keeping launched
#handsoffmyhobby campaign created for European Parliament elections
First Primary Authority scheme for pet shops created

2015

Guidance on selling fish online launched

Exiting the EU

Ours has always been a global industry, with fish arriving from more than 40 countries across the world. But trade from the European Union since the border was established in January 2021 has taken up a disproportionate amount of our time, particularly getting to grips with supplying Northern Ireland. But there are also opportunities as UK law can start to diverge from EU regulations and we will play our part in highlighting opportunities for change.

What we did during 2020-2021

Transition issues

Without doubt there have been many issues for GB businesses which supply Northern Ireland since leaving the EU. We have worked closely with UK regulators and Government agencies, particularly the Fish Health Inspectorate (FHI) and the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA), in seeking to improve GB systems to ease trade movements with both Northern Ireland and the EU.

We wrote to a number of Government ministers and agency Chief Executives about the numerous issues facing our industry following the UK's exit from the EU, both for livestock and products coming into the UK from Europe and the rest of the world. This has resulted in regular meetings with officials to look at how Border Control Posts will operate in the future.

EU to UK law

Leaving the European Union does give us opportunities to highlight longstanding concerns about ill-targeted and all-encompassing EU rules. One small victory for common sense was the news that apple snails (*Pomacea*) could return to GB aquariums, although not to Northern Ireland. Apple snails have been prevented from UK sale since the EU stopped their movement in 2012

after pest issues in Southern Spain. At the time OATA lobbied against the move but the EU's 'one size fits all' approach meant a blanket approach to the mollusc. So it was welcome news that Defra's Plant Health team took the view the popular aquarium snail is not considered a pest in this country when they translated the EU regulation into GB law. We are hopeful a similar approach will be taken with a number of aquatic plants, such as water hyacinth, and we are engaging with Defra to seek the removal of non-invasive species from GB regulations.

We are also working closely with the CITES team in Defra to highlight areas where changes to the Wildlife Trade Regulations and associated procedures would reduce bureaucratic burdens for business without compromising the aims

We wrote to a number of Government ministers and agency Chief Executives about the numerous issues facing our industry following the UK's exit from the EU.

2016

Wild Caught Fish: the trade, the benefits, the facts report published

2017

Brexit manifesto created following UK's decision to leave the EU

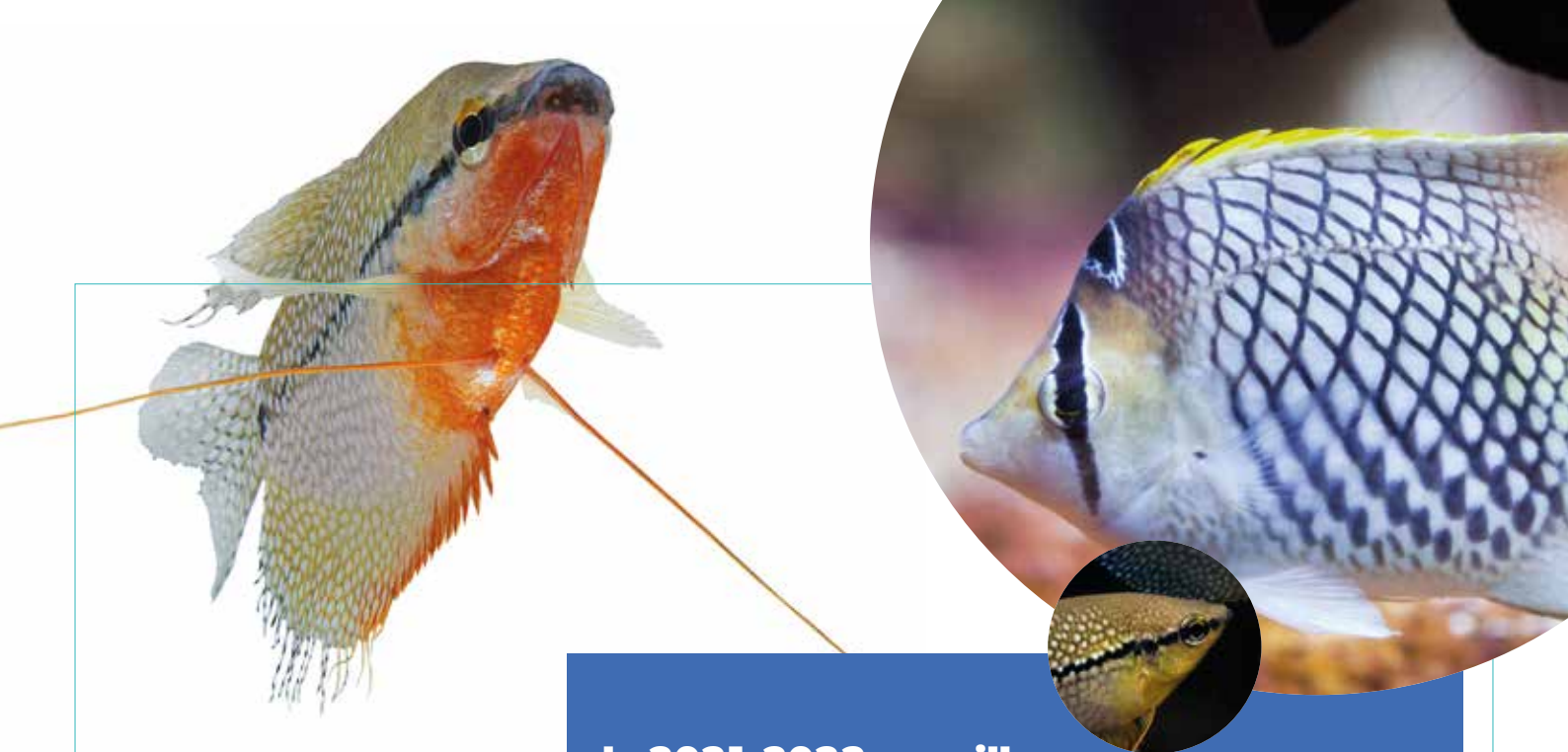
New research commissioned from Cefas on cyanide use in marine ornamental trade

2018

OATA issues guidance on new animal activities licensing regulations in England

New coral identification guide created for European Commission to help customs officers

City & Guilds accredit our revamped Foundation & Advanced training programmes



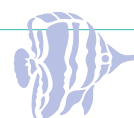
of the Convention, including seeking the introduction of an earned recognition scheme.

Tariffs

We have worked with a number of our members to highlight opportunities to reduce a variety of tariffs relevant to our sector following a call from the Government. Tariffs are paid on imports and there are a number of anomalies that affect our industry, for example the 0% tariff for freshwater fish compared to a 6% tariff for marine fish which does not make much sense. This is likely to be a long piece of work as the Government looks at all existing tariffs so we will continue to keep a close eye on this because it ultimately could make a big difference to importing companies.

In 2021-2022 we will:

-  Actively pursue regulatory change on issues that affect our industry to ensure GB laws are fit for purpose and minimise burdens on business.
-  Engage with the Government to identify improvements that can be made at the border to simplify and streamline the importing process.
-  Monitor the Government's Tariff Implementation Monitoring exercise to see where we can influence reductions in import tariffs.
-  Work with the European Pet Organization to keep a watching brief on EU regulations that would affect UK businesses.
-  Work with other UK trade associations, such as the Horticultural Trades Association, on plant import issues.



2019

2020

2021

OATA plays integral role in reinvigoration of Government advisory body the Companion Animal Sector Council
Supports establishment of freshwater fish conservation initiative Shoal and becomes strategic partner
Called as expert witness on Environmental Audit Committee's invasive species inquiry
New City & Guilds invasives species training module launched

OATA plays central role in securing essential status for pet businesses as Covid-19 pandemic strikes
Joins forces with OFI & EPO to represent industry views to CITES marine ornamentals project
Secures streamlined procedures for sending fish exports to NI

New *Fishing for Facts* report launched



About OATA

We believe OATA is an organisation that punches above its weight. Our small team can only achieve what they do with the support of our voluntary Board of Directors who each brings their particular industry expertise to our work.

Our Board meets four times a year and we have a programme of New Blood, offering others the chance to take a seat at the table and see what it's like to be a Board member. If this interests you then email or talk to our Office Manager Ray Valovec.

Staff

Dominic Whitmee
Chief Executive

Dr Tracey King
(left June 2021)
Biosecurity & Training Adviser

Dr Matthew Bond
(joined October 2020)
Scientific & Technical Adviser

Ray Valovec
Office Manager

Pauline Davey
PR & Parliamentary Officer (part-time)

Directors (as at July 2021)

Matthew Stevenson
Chair
Seneye

James Allison
Aquapic Solutions

Kevin Barton
ALF (Aquatic Distributors) Ltd

Pete Carey
Vice Chair
CASCO

Laura Carlin
EcoMarines

Robert Edgecock
Independent Aquatic Imports Ltd

Caroline Everett
Anglo Aquatic Plants Co Ltd

Neil Hardy
Neil Hardy Aquatica Ltd

Simon Langdale
Maidenhead Aquatics @ Iver

Philip Lawton
Kidsgrove Tropicals

Ian Paton
Pets at Home

Kevin Rose
Vice Chair
Lynchford Aquatics

Dr David Pool
FishScience Ltd

Brian Schaff
TMC

Pete Smith
Aquasense (UK) Ltd

Dr Donna Snellgrove
Mars WALTHAM

Simon Strobe
(resigned July 2021)
Tetra

Ben Windeatt
Pets Choice

New Blood (non-voting)

Sean Evans
Wharf Aquatics

Annual General Meeting

At the time of printing this year's AGM is planned for November 2021. Watch for updates on our website about this. All OATA members are welcome.

Contact our office

By phone on 01373 301353

By email on info@ornamentalfish.org

By writing to

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Join OATA – and feel the benefit



Strength in numbers in a changing world






In this changing world, trade associations are more important than ever. We hope we proved to be an important source of valuable help and support during recent difficult times. And it's exactly during rapidly shifting times when a collective voice is needed. Businesses like yours need to concentrate on your own work, safe in the knowledge there is an organisation looking out for your interests, highlighting the issues you face and looking out for the pitfalls and problems for the future.

We make the voices of our members heard at national and even global levels by representing a broad range of businesses involved in the industry. Membership support is vital to our continued success and by joining OATA businesses help to keep your industry alive and protect your own interests.

As a member, you benefit from:

-  Practical help and support to enable you to stay ahead of the competition
-  Discounts on our City & Guilds accredited training programmes to help you train your staff
-  Membership of our Primary Authority schemes to give you the advice and backing of a regulatory authority, especially helpful if you are a small business that does not have the money or expertise to tackle some of the regulatory issues you can face
-  Free legal helpline when you need advice fast
-  Free audit of insurance arrangements to take the hassle out of getting the best cover
-  Safeguard the future of the industry and your business

What does OATA do for the aquatic industry?

-  We lobby and challenge UK and international governments and organisations to make sure fish, plants, invertebrates, dry goods and medications remain available for sale.
-  We offer high quality City & Guilds accredited training packages on fish care for staff and individuals which are recognised by local authorities.
-  We seek to promote high standards of husbandry and welfare within the industry with our Code of Conduct and free point of sale information.
-  We help our members to keep up-to-date with the latest news that could affect their business through our monthly e-newsletter and the broad range of information on our website.
-  We promote the hobby of fishkeeping through our online videos, social media and our work with the press.

Find out more about becoming a member

Visit www.ornamentalfish.org/join-us

Give us a call on **01373 301353**



The voice of the ornamental fish industry



Ornamental Aquatic Trade Association Ltd

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