

Introduction – European sea bass and gilthead sea bream



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Introduction

European sea bass and gilthead sea bream are mainly farmed in the Mediterranean area. Worldwide production in 2015 equated to 417-556 million sea bream¹ and 325-406 million sea bass². In 2016, production of sea bream and sea bass was estimated to be 185,980³ and 191,003⁴ tonnes, respectively, nearing a total of 400,000 tonnes². Global production of both European sea bass and gilthead sea bream has almost doubled in the last ten years, mainly outside the EU. Gilthead sea bream production has increased 49.2% from 2007 to 2016 primarily from Turkey, Egypt and Tunisia⁵.

Within the EU, both sea bass and sea bream production has remained steady over the last decade, with Greece and Spain providing 80% and 74% of production respectively (2016)⁶. Figures for European sea bass production in 2016 were 155,344 tonnes². There are very few exports outside the EU, while imports from outside the EU are significant and come mainly from Turkey. Italy, Greece and the Netherlands are the main importers of sea bass from Turkey⁷. Figures for gilthead sea bream production in 2016 were 142,663 tonnes⁸. Trade between the EU and third countries is very limited. On the other hand, intra-EU trade is substantial, Greece being the major exporter towards Italy, Portugal, France and Spain⁹.

Given the size of both industries, it is even more important to recognise European sea bass and gilthead sea bream as sentient beings that need to be provided with a good quality of life in a farmed environment.

Compassion in World Farming's gilthead sea bream and European sea bass resources outline the issues and make recommendations on improving welfare in producing sea bass and sea bream from the seawater phase up to harvest and slaughter.

Firstly, there is a welfare issues table outlining how farming practices may affect the physical wellbeing, mental wellbeing and the expression of natural behaviours in gilthead sea bream and European sea bass.

The next resource is our recommendations explaining succinctly the main recommendations Compassion advocates for rearing these species, as well as measuring their welfare. There then follows a more detailed document explaining the scientific data with which we base these recommendations upon. Both resources explore the issues based on a "good housing", "good feeding", "good health" and "opportunity to express appropriate behaviour" format. Finally, the welfare indicators resource summarises the best ways of measuring animal welfare during the rearing phase.

All animals farmed for food should be humanely slaughtered by being effectively stunned, rendered instantly insensible, and remaining unconscious until death supervenes. The final section of this pack of resources focuses on humane slaughter, from crowding to killing, and includes slaughter welfare issues and guidelines for minimising stress and pain in gilthead sea bream and European sea bass. It also includes welfare indicators to monitor the effectiveness of the slaughter process from harvest through to stunning and killing.



¹ <http://fishcount.org.uk/studydatascreens2/2015/numbers-of-farmed-fish-CO-2015.php?country=Europe&species=Gilthead%20sea%20bream>

² <http://fishcount.org.uk/studydatascreens2/2015/numbers-of-farmed-fish-CO-2015.php?country=Europe&species=European%20sea%20bass>

³ http://www.fao.org/fishery/culturedspecies/Sparus_aurata/en

⁴ http://www.fao.org/fishery/culturedspecies/Dicentrarchus_labrax/en#tcNA00C5

⁵ https://www.eumofa.eu/documents/20178/137160/Gilthead+seabream_31-1.pdf

⁶ https://www.eumofa.eu/documents/20178/137160/European+seabass_31-1.pdf

⁷ https://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/sites/fisheries/files/docs/body/seabass_en.pdf

⁸ <http://feap.info/index.php/data/>

⁹ https://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/sites/fisheries/files/docs/body/sea-bream_en.pdf