

Ocean of opportunity: Kagoshima's seafood exports surge past historic milestone

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In a defining moment for Japan's regional export economy, Kagoshima Prefecture has charted a historic high in seafood exports, surpassing the ¥3 billion threshold for the first time since records began in 1979. According to the Kagoshima Branch Customs, the total export value of seafood and processed seafood products reached approximately ¥3.207 billion in 2025, underscoring a powerful surge in global demand for premium Japanese marine produce.

This landmark performance reflects not only the enduring global appeal of Japanese cuisine but also Kagoshima's growing stature as a key supplier of high-quality seafood to international markets. At the heart of this export boom lies the prefecture's prized yellowtail, which continues to command strong demand, particularly along the U.S. West Coast, where discerning consumers increasingly favour authentic and premium-grade imports.

Frozen yellowtail fillets emerged as the dominant export category, contributing approximately ¥1.331 billion—accounting for 41.5 percent of total seafood exports. This was followed by frozen skipjack tuna at around ¥816 million, representing 25.4 percent, and raw yellowtail exports valued at approximately ¥736 million, contributing 22.9 percent. Together, these three segments illustrate a well-balanced export portfolio anchored in both value-added and fresh product offerings.

Geographically, the United States retained its position as the largest market, importing seafood products worth approximately ¥969 million, or 30.2 percent of the total. This performance comes despite concerns surrounding tariff policies under the administration of U.S. President Donald Trump, highlighting the resilience of demand driven by the superior quality and

reputation of Kagoshima's seafood. Thailand and South Korea followed closely, with imports valued at approximately ¥753 million (23.5 percent) and ¥751 million (23.4 percent), respectively. Collectively, these three markets accounted for more than three-quarters of Kagoshima's seafood exports.

Export dynamics further reveal a strategic distribution pattern, with frozen yellowtail primarily shipped to European markets and the United States, skipjack tuna directed toward Southeast Asia, and raw yellowtail finding strong demand in South Korea. This diversified market approach has enabled Kagoshima to maximise its reach while mitigating regional demand fluctuations.

Beyond seafood, Kagoshima Prefecture's broader export landscape also recorded robust growth, with total exports rising by 41.7 percent to approximately ¥95.45 billion in 2025. Key contributors included rubber products and electrical equipment, reflecting a diversified export base that continues to gain momentum in global markets.

While the current trajectory signals strong international confidence in Kagoshima's fishery commodities, authorities remain mindful of ongoing global uncertainties. The focus, therefore, is shifting toward exploring new export destinations and strengthening market diversification strategies to sustain long-term growth.

As Kagoshima rides the crest of this export wave, its success story stands as a testament to the enduring power of quality, tradition, and strategic global engagement in shaping the future of Japan's seafood industry.